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SELECTIONS

FROM THE

EDINBURGH REVIEW,

COMPRISING

THE BEST ARTICLES IN THAT JOURNAL,

FROM ITS COMMENCEMENT TO THE PRESENT TIME.

WITH

A PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION,
AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

EDITED BY MAURICE CROSS,
SECRETARY TO THE BELFAST HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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PART SECOND.

CHARACTERS OF DISTINGUISHED POETS.

SPENSER—SHAKSPEARE—MILTON—DRYDEN—POPE—YOUNG —AND THOMSON.*

The series of Mr. Stockdale's Eminent Poets commences with Spenser. In going farther back, in point of date, than Johnson, his plan is commendable. Spenser, however antiquated his style, is certainly the earliest of our modern English poets. Surrey and Wyatt, though they are found in the mighty chasm that occurs in our poetical history between Chaucer and Spenser, and though they are sufficiently intelligible to be called modern, are still not sufficiently great to stand as the leaders of a new dynasty. The metaphysical school, who succeeded Spenser and Shakspeare, were unworthy to stand in Johnson's list as the only surviving predecessors of Milton.

The outlines of Spenser's poetical character are pretty faithfully drawn by our author; though, as he duly acknowledges, with ample obligations to the labours of a preceding critic, Warton. The principal circumstance which seems to have debarred Spenser from attaining, as he has certainly approached, the throne of poetical excellence, seems to be the excessive wildness of that machinery which he has adopted from the more extravagant of the Italian schools,—from Ariosto, and not from Tasso. Under this may perhaps be included the fault of his excessive allegory and personification, which associates personified abstract ideas and human beings at the battle as well as the banquet, to the exclusion of even that faint consistency which fable ought to preserve. The form of his stanza has been pronounced by many critics to be tedious and monotonous. Our author confesses that he does not think so; and yet he supposes that it is owing to the shackles of this stanza that the poetry of Spenser has been loaded with so many passages of languor, tautology, and violated grammar. Undoubtedly the stanza of Spenser is less easily constructed in our language than in Italian; but none of the faults of Spenser can be justly attributed to the form of his metre. It is by far the richest and the sweetest of our measures. More definite than blank verse, it admits both of simplicity and magnificence of sound and language. Without the terseness of unvaried rhyme, a measure unfitted to long narration, it is sufficiently uniform to please the ear, and sufficiently various to protract the pleasure. Spenser owes his languid lines merely to the careless taste of an age which set no value on condensed expression. Without disrespect to our truly majestic measure of blank verse, let some of the rich passages in Spenser, or of the Castle of

* Stockdale's Lectures on Eminent English Poets.—Vol. xii. p. 62. April, 1808.

Indolence, be produced,—those passages, especially, of the Fairy Queen, in which Spenser's genius has put forth a diligent hand; and we shall find, that the melody and the pomp of this measure, while it accords with the humbler, gives dignity to the loftiest conceptions. When the difficulty of any measure is such as to occasion more restraint in overcoming it than effect when it is overcome, that measure may be called a shackle upon genius. But where so much effect is produced, the difficulty that is overcome becomes a triumph to genius; and the restraint operates like those obstacles of oblique pressure in mechanics, which ultimately augment the impetus of projectile bodies, though, for a while, they seemed to oppose it. But, in truth, if we except the unfortunate adoption of extravagantly allegorical machinery, the few imperfections of Spenser seem to arise from his carelessness. The life of man was not sufficient to have wrought up to classical purity so much composition as he has left behind him. Profusion was the fault of his bountiful genius, as prolixity was that of his minor contemporaries. It was the custom to write much on the minutest subject; and though the fertile mind of Spenser precludes that profusion which gives words without ideas, still there is an accumulation of characters, events, speeches, and descriptions, which bewilder the reader, not so much with enchantment, as confusion. The story of the Fairy Queen is more like a succession of triumphal arches than a regular building. We pass on with admiration and delight; but yet both are occasionally cooled by the labyrinthical irregularity of the design. We miss that regular subserviency of minor events and characters to those which are great and important, which constitutes the charm of a perfect story, whether we call it epic, or by any other appellation. The characters are in vain varied from each other by a charming verisimilitude and fidelity to human nature. They are in vain elevated to the most heroic scale of excellence, to produce that entire interest, of which Spenser's genius could not otherwise have failed. Superlative heroes and peerless beauties are crowded upon us in such numbers, that we lose sight of them in the blaze of each other. Had Spenser lived later in the days of poetry, there is every reason to suppose he would have simplified his plan, and condensed the versification of his poem. In a poem of a few hundred pages, the stanza would not seem monotonous; in one amounting to thousands of pages, blank verse itself would at last wear us out.

Let it not be held sacrilegious that these remarks are made on a name so justly revered by Englishmen; on one who, if Chaucer be called the day-star, may certainly be pronounced the sunrise, of our poetry. What shall we think of that romantic poem, which, with all the faults of its structure and careless execution, is still the wonder of a third century, and the fountain from which our great poets of the last age imbibed their inspiration most deeply?

The subject of the next lecture is Shakspeare; of whom it seems difficult to say any thing that has not been said before,—a difficulty which Mr. Stockdale has not overcome. Of Shakspeare's minor poems he thinks unfavourably; an opinion with which the reasonable worshippers of our greatest bard are likely to coincide. All the praise that can be given to those pieces for which his contemporaries gratuitously called him the honey-tongued Shakspeare, is, that they are bad resemblances of the heaviest passages of Spenser. But when we compare the dramatic style of Shakspeare with the descriptive of Spenser, it is then that we are conscious how rich the age of

Elizabeth was, which at once contained two such masters, so high in their degree, yet so different in the species of their merit. In Spenser we see, as it were, the painter, in Shakspeare the statuary, of imitated nature. Instead of the rich and highly-coloured style of Spenser, so peculiarly suited to description, Shakspeare presents us with the simple and complete imitation of naked nature. His style, therefore (unless where it suits pedantic characters, or complies with his own occasional love of latinising the meaning of words), is more like the language of life, varying from the ludicrous to the sublime with the characters who address us. Shakspeare is more eminently the poet of nature; he brings nature more palpably before us; his imitation is nearer.

Among other remarks, by no means original, we are told, that invention is one of the grand characteristics of Shakspeare; that no poet ever possessed this faculty in a more fertile or vigorous degree; and we are taught to discriminate between the poetical gifts of invention and imagination. "The inventive poet," says Mr. Stockdale, "signalises himself by combining remoter images. Such a writer is emphatically the Ποιητης, the poet, the maker, almost the creator. Yet,

'What can we reason but from what we know?'"

This question, unanswerable as it seems, he answers by immediately subjoining, "The inventive or creative genius sometimes disdains the walk of man; nay, it will not be limited by the various, the vast, and the apparently unbounded region of nature." He then gives the Weird Sisters, the Airy Dagger, and the Enchanted Island, as the wonderful, the charming, or the striking productions of Shakspeare's *invention*; "the finest assemblage of objects," he continues, "which have obeyed the common and established laws of nature. Human characters, however forcibly or humorously drawn, I beg permission to class with the works of imagination. Caliban and Prospero, according to this distinction, are the boast of Shakspeare's invention; Shylock and Falstaff those of his imagination." All this distinction appears to us superfluous. To divide invention from imagination, seems to be merely dividing the included from the including term. "Imagination," as the most luminous of moral philosophers has described it, "is a complex power: * it includes conception, or simple apprehension, which enables us to form a notion of those former objects of perception, or of knowledge, out of which we are to make a selection; abstraction, which separates the selected materials from the qualities and circumstances which are connected with them in nature; and judgment and taste, which direct their combination. To these powers we may add that particular habit of association to which we give the name of fancy, as it is this which presents to our choice all the different materials which are subservient to the efforts of imagination, and which may therefore be considered as forming the groundwork of poetical genius."

Now, this description of imagination will apply with equal propriety to Shakspeare's Enchanted Island and to his character of Falstaff, leaving no greater merit to his supernatural than his mortal agents. In fact, in point of consummate excellence, the character of Falstaff, though human, is more truly original than that of the monster himself. He found materials for both in the characters of men, and in their reigning superstitions. We may

* Stewart's Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind.

allow poetry to boast, in her own language, of him who "exhausted worlds and then imagined new;" but, in reality, the new worlds could only be made up of the elements supplied by the old. For Caliban, as well as Falstaff, the materials were ready to his hand. The component parts of the latter abounded in common life. The materials of the monstrous character abounded in the floating legends of the age: an age, when the names and offices of familiar spirits were as familiar to the ear, and as well believed, as those of human beings;—an age, in which the reigning monarch wrote a treatise on the horns and tail of the devil. To the Rosicrucian philosophy we are indebted for the nominal machinery of the inimitable tragedy of the Tempest; though to Shakspeare we are indebted for all that genius could do with such machinery. Nor is it improbable, that in some of those legends of Italian fable, from which so many of his plays are derived, he found the very name and offices of his admired Caliban, the witch's bastard by the rape of a demon.*

We are next presented with two whole lectures on Milton. In the first, our lecturer engages to demonstrate, "with almost mathematical precision, that Milton is the first, because the most sublime, of all poets." The steps of Mr. Stockdale's demonstration, however, appear to us more of a legal than mathematical nature. He subpœnas two witnesses to character: Addison is one; Johnson the other. Addison's evidence is wholly favourable; Johnson's is partly unfavourable; but, by skilful cross-questioning, he is made to contradict himself. He then triumphantly exclaims to Johnson, "Out of thine own mouth I will condemn thee!" The glaring inconsistencies of Johnson do indeed convict him; but this, in law, would only set aside the credibility of his evidence. In criticism it is a two-edged argument; it invalidates the faith of his praise as well as of his censure. I object to the sincerity of Dr. Johnson's censures, says the worshipper of Milton, because I can confront them with his praises. And I object to his praises, the assailant of Milton's merit will reply, because I can confront them with his censures. This proves that the merits of poets are to be debated on their own grounds, not *merely* on the critical authorities for or against them.

Let us admit, however, that Milton's greatness is established by such judicial process,—established it surely is by the testimony which every mind alive to the beautiful and the great will bear to his genius; still we object to the truth of our lecturer's text, that Milton is the greatest of all poets; or, to adopt the still wilder words of his declamation, "that all other poets *are babies* compared to him. The claim to this supremacy is founded on Milton's sublimity; and the following definition of sublimity is subjoined:

* "I was informed," says Mr. Warton, speaking of an old romance, Aurelio and Isabella. "I was informed, by the late Mr. Collins of Chichester, that Shakspeare's Tempest, for which no reason is yet assigned, was formed on this favourite romance. But although this information has not proved true, on examination, an useful conclusion may be drawn from it, that Shakspeare's story is somewhere to be found in an Italian novel; at least, that the story preceded Shakspeare. Mr. Collins had searched this subject with no less fidelity than judgment and industry; but, his memory failing in his last calamitous indisposition, probably gave me the name of one novel for another. I remember, he added a circumstance, which may lead to a discovery, that the principal character of the romance, answering to Shakspeare's Prospero, had bound a spirit, like Ariel, to obey his call, and perform his services. It was a common pretence of the dealers in occult sciences to have a demon at command. At least, Aurelio, or Orelio, was probably one of the names of this romance, the production and multiplication being the grand object of alchymy. Taken at large, the magical part of the Tempest is founded in that sort of philosophy which was practised by John Dee and his associates, and has been called the Rosicrucian. The name Ariel came from the Talmudistic mysteries, with which the learned Jews had infected this science."—*Warton's History of English Poetry*, vol. iii. p. 473.

—"I shall endeavour," says Mr. Stockdale, "to give a comprehensive and clear idea, or definition, of that capital species of writing. To write then with sublimity, is to choose the greatest, or the most splendid, or the most awful, existing or imaginable objects, and to express or display them with a corresponding propriety, force, and majesty of expression." Now, we object, with great deference, to the clearness of this definition; for it tells us no more than that sublime writers choose great subjects, and write with great dignity upon them. Nor can we admit sublimity to be called a *species* of writing, as if it were the epic, the tragic, or the pastoral; it is a quality, not a species of writing; it is a quality, too, which comprehends considerable varieties. The sublime in splendour of conception, in pomp of language, in description of prodigious things, is Milton's. Analogies are unsafe illustrations; but the reader of Milton has probably felt, from his influence, an impression quite analogous to that elevating pleasure which cartoon paintings of the first masters excite. Nothing can exceed, in the quality of sublime, those pictures of the fallen angels in their march over hell, and in their council of Pandemonium. Nothing, in beauty, or sublimity, can exceed (we shall say generally) the first six books of the Paradise Lost. But this excellence, this sublimity, and this beauty which nothing eclipses, does not necessarily eclipse all other excellence. Milton's glory may consist in his subject: that subject has certainly afforded his genius ample room for some of the finest scenes and finest passages of human writing. But the common testimony of mankind permits us to say, without fear of being called presumptuous, that, as a whole, Paradise Lost is deficient in interest; that the last six books do most palpably fall off; and that the warfare between God and his creatures is a constant bar to our sympathy with either victor or vanquished, and annihilates, what is the soul of pleasure in poetical narration, curiosity. These expressions are not Johnsonian cavils; they contain *all* that can be fairly said in objection to Milton, and nothing more. How much still remains to excite our veneration! Allowing, therefore, to Milton every praise that can be pronounced on those passages, and even entire books, where the agents of his poem, his speeches, and conception of character, are sublime; still this quality of sublimity does not absorb all excellence. The state of fancy excited by it, is not, by its nature, suited for long possession of the human mind.—It keeps its faculties on the utmost stretch; it is of itself but a single quality: and though it does not exist in Milton, any more than in other great poets, unconnected with the beautiful and pathetic; yet, if it be assumed as the ground of Milton's claim to supremacy in poetry, we are entitled to say, that a certain union of other constituent qualities of a poet are, collectively, paramount to its greatness. The opinion which, we make bold to say, the world at large maintain, is, that the aggregate of all the poetical qualities of Shakspeare is superior to that of Milton's—including his sublimity and every other claim to admiration.

If the epic poet be sublime, so is our great tragedian. We do not pretend to divide the general term sublime with unnecessary distinction; yet, when we say that Shakspeare is sublime, we must speak more of his merit in the aggregate than judging him by detached passages. His sublimity is more strong than brilliant; it lies more in effect than in perceptible manner. It is like listening to an orator, of whose powers of persuasion we are not fully conscious till he has finished his discourse. When we peruse the dialogue of his dramas, so much of the familiar

occurs in his language, that the triumph over our sympathies seems to be obtained without an effort of the poet. The design of Milton to dazzle us with splendid and overwhelm us with great images, is always obvious. Milton has all the ensigns and regalia of sovereign genius; Shakspeare all the power and prerogative. Let us recur to an instance of the sublime in Shakspeare, and it will illustrate this distinction. Take the scene of Macbeth relating his murder of Duncan to Lady Macbeth,—"There's one did laugh in his sleep, and one cried, Murder!" The dialogue commencing with this line has no passage, which, taken separately, and read to a person unacquainted with the play, would seem a specimen of sublime composition; yet the effect of the whole, when we read the play, is sublime; it is like something more than human language. If the terrors of the tragic muse be not sublime, by what name shall we call them? Let us again suppose it possible to find a person susceptible of poetical impressions, who had not read Milton, and we should have no difficulty, in every page, to quote such sentences as would strike him, though read unconnectedly, with wonder and delight; such lines as the description of Satan and his peers,—"He spoke, and to confirm his words outflew millions of flaming swords," etc. But let such a reader, even warm and fresh from the bright wonders of Paradise Lost, submit his feelings to the influence of some of Shakspeare's best tragedies; and the result, we think, will be, that, judging by collective effect, by creation of character, by vivid imitation of nature, and by combined and general tests of genius, he will award the superiority to Shakspeare.

Nor would this judgment be formed exclusively on the creative originality of our dramatic master. Without reference to their comparative power over the passions of terror and pity, let the testimony of mankind decide which of the two poets is richer in those sentences which contain as it were the pith, the quintessence, the condensed originality, which might serve for the texts of volumes, for the motto of every situation in life. Is the poet from whom it has been emphatically said "that philosophers might learn wisdom, and courtiers politeness," is this poet one of the babies compared to Milton?

In the praise of Milton's minor poems our author is deservedly enthusiastic. There is one piece which has escaped his eulogy, and which, from being omitted in many editions of Milton's works, is less popularly known than its extreme majesty and picturesque beauty seem to deserve: we allude to the speech of the Genius of the Wood in the Arcades.

> "For know, by lot from Jove, I am the Power
> Of this fair wood, and live in oaken bower,
> To nurse the saplings tall, and curl the grove
> With ringlets quaint, and wanton windings wove;
> And all my plants I save from nightly ill
> Of noisome winds and blasting vapours chill,
> And from the boughs brush off the evil dew,
> And heal the harms of thwarting thunder blue,
> Or what the cross dire-looking planet smites,
> Or hurtful worm with canker'd venom bites:
> When evening grey doth rise, I fetch my round
> Over the mount and all this hallow'd ground,
> And early, ere the odorous breath of morn
> Awakes the slumbering leaves, or tassell'd horn
> Shakes the high thicket, haste I all about,
> *Number my ranks*, and visit every sprout
> *With puissant* words and murmurs made to bless;

But else, in deep of night, when drowsiness
Hath lock'd up mortal sense, then listen I
To the celestial Sirens' harmony,
That sit upon the nine enfolded spheres,
And sing to those that hold the fatal sheers,
And turn the adamantine spindle round,
On which the fate of gods and men is wound:
Such sweet compulsion doth in music lie,
To lull the daughters of Necessity,
And keep unsteady Nature to her law,
And the low world in measured motion draw
After the heavenly tune, which none may hear
Of human mould with gross unpurged ear; &c. &c.

The rich and diversified merits of Dryden form, as our author justly remarks, not an abrupt descent from the sublimity of Milton. Whether we recollect him as a lyric, a narrative, dramatic, political, or satirical poet, or as a translator, the name of Dryden summons up recollections of excellence. The union of critical with poetical power; the vigour and the haleness of expression which for ever look fresh in his sentences and lines; the majestic force without harshness, and the perfect and downright English of Dryden's style, entitle him to this great succession, and perhaps rank him in merit the fourth after Spenser, Shakspeare, and Milton, of English poets. If, indeed, we could forget Otway, there would be no need of qualifying this opinion; but the pathos of Otway, after all, as it stands single in competition with the infinite varieties of Dryden's merit, allows us rather to suggest, than to dwell upon a doubt of their comparative rank. Nor is there to be found, in all the treasures of biography, a life more interesting than Dryden's. In the midst of all its alloy, his genius commands our admiration, as his character, though degraded by several imperfections, attaches our regard. The life of Otway, imperfectly as it is given, exhibits a mind of finer sensibility, sinking under adversity. Dryden's teems with interest and with instruction. While the few and venial spots which poverty left upon his fame may afford a lesson to the wisest, and a caution to the weakest; his unassuming modesty, his fortitude, his industry, and his high spirit, will teach no less improving an example. His creative powers are less by far than those of his great poetical predecessors; yet he enlarged the empire of poetry. He applied it with grace and effect to subjects which had never before been thought susceptible of its beauties; and he did so, without either raising his subjects to an undue importance, or degrading his poetry by bringing it down to meet his subject. Polemical religion and politics, the least obviously adapted for such embellishments, came from his hands with attractions unknown before or since. The constitutional blemishes of his Hind and Panther form, it is true, one exception to this merit; but even in that production there are nervous passages; and his Religio Laici more than atones for all the defects of its sister poem. The criticism of Pope is but an echo of his critical poetry. Indeed, in his critical canons, he reminds us of the primitive lawgivers, who passed their ordonnances in verse, and whose ordonnances have continued to be obeyed when reduced by others to familiar prose. For, common as the truths which he uttered are now become, we owe them traditionally to him. We find them, no doubt, even in Blair; but Dryden first promulged them.

As a political poet, he is without a rival, and without a second. Before we censure the scriptural obscurity of Absalom and Achitophel, let us recollect the scriptural knowledge of the age in which he wrote, when every Bible name and fact was familiar to every reader; let us recollect, also, the

fine advantage which his genius drew from masking his satire behind this allegorical parallel. As the poetical criticism in general, so the poetical satire in particular, of Dryden, was the prototype of Pope's. The Dunciad prolonged, without magnifying, the triumph of talent over dulness. We should quote our lecturer's characteristic remarks on Dryden's translation as the best specimen, in our apprehension, of his notice of this poet, were there not already commentaries on those performances more valuable than ever were written on translated poetry. These are found in Dryden's own prefaces and dedications. A more perfect essay on translation, or a finer discrimination of the ancient poets, does not exist, than in his preface to a miscellany of translations from Theocritus, Lucretius, and Horace. In the variety of his translations, unequal as they are in merit, a complete preference is still difficult, from the number of rival beauties; but those of Horace are perhaps his masterpieces. The enviable sensations of a fortunate individual have been well described by an eloquent writer, who descending into the new-discovered ruins of Pompeii, found the Roman senator in his robes, whose body had been preserved with almost the semblance of life for fifteen hundred years. There is a pleasure analogous to this in perusing some passages of Dryden's Horace; but something more than dead antiquity is there restored. We have not the dust, but the soul of Horace; no affected adaptation of ancient expressions to modern usages; nothing of that smart dressing out of an ancient statue in the modern costume, which so much disfigures Pope's, and, it must be owned, also many of Dryden's translations. The language of antiquity is changed, but not its simplicity. How much the nature and sprightliness of the "*Vides ut alta stet nive Candidum,*" is preserved in the ode which concludes with these lines:—

"The appointed hour of promised bliss,
The pleasing whisper in the dark,
The half-unwilling willing kiss,
The laugh that guides thee to the mark,
When the kind nymph would coyness feign,
And hides but to be found again—
These, these are joys the gods for youth ordain."

Nor has lyric poetry, if we except the memorable ode from Hafiz by Sir William Jones, found a happier transfusion from one language into another, than in many lines of the 29th Ode of the Second Book.

"Fortune, that, with malicious joy,
Does man her slave oppress,
Proud of her office to destroy,
Is seldom pleased to bless;
Still various, and inconstant still,
But with an inclination to be ill,
Promotes, degrades, delights in strife,
And makes a lottery of life:
I can enjoy her while she's kind;
But when she dances in the wind,
And shakes her wings, and will not stay,
I puff the prostitute away;
The little or the much she gave is quietly resign'd," &c. &c.

Dryden is one of those poets on whose faults and inequalities it is fair to dwell, as a matter of truth; but, for the interests and promotion of good taste, and for the sake of warning to young writers, it is not so necessary. The reason is, that, though a poet trained by discipline, and formed upon rules, he is still a most natural writer; his faults are those of carelessness,

not of bad taste: hence they are obvious, and not alluringly dangerous, like the systematic affectations of poets who err from inherent or acquired corruption. If we except his partiality to rhyming tragedies, there seems no distinguishable fault in his poetical creed. When minds of this kind are impelled by want, or betrayed by impatience, to publish their crudities and errors, however numerous, they are not apt to assume the shape of imposing errors. It is the *dulcia vitia* of system, and laborious polish, which are apt to perplex and betray an inexperienced taste. But the chaff and the corn of Dryden are easily separable. Where he offends, he offends as boldly as he pleases. Equivocal passages may be found; but ambiguity is as seldom his fault in merit as in meaning. But, with all its high endowments, the poetical mind of Dryden was far short of even limited and frail human perfection. He wants one of the chief characteristics of genius, a tender and pathetic mind. The power (as Johnson observes) which predominated in his intellectual operations was rather strong reason than quick sensibility. On all occasions that were presented, he rather studied than felt; and produced sentiments, not such as nature enforces, but meditation supplies. With the simple and elemental passions, as they spring separately in the mind, he seems not much acquainted; and seldom describes them but as they are complicated by the various relations of society, and confused in the tumults and agitations of life. What he says of love may contribute to the explanation of his character:

> "Love various minds does variously inspire;
> It stirs in gentle bosoms gentle fire.
> Like that of incense on the altar laid:
> But raging flames tempestuous souls invade;
> A fire which every windy passion blows,
> With pride it mounts, or with revenge it glows."

Dryden's was not one of the gentle bosoms: Love as it subsists in itself, but with no tendency but to the person loved, and wishing only for correspondent kindness; such love as shuts out all other interest—the love of the golden age, was too soft and subtile to put his faculties in motion. He hardly conceived it but in its turbulent effervescence with some other desires—when it was inflamed by rivalry, or obstructed by difficulties—when it invigorated ambition, or exasperated revenge.

Pope is naturally introduced as the successor of Dryden. His character is thus given by our lecturer:—

"In comparing and estimating different poets of the first class, we ought to observe something like mathematical accuracy,—we ought to weigh the whole aggregate of their respective merits In making comparative estimates, with this justice to Pope, we should find in him so many, and so apparently incompatible excellences, that we should deem the possible and eternal privation of his works as great a single loss as could happen to the republic of letters. Of what a melancholy and irreparable chasm, among the poetical ornaments of England, would feeling hearts be sensible, if the Eloisa to Abelard could be lost! This poem is quite unrivalled in the ancient and modern world: it consists of three hundred and sixty lines, and every line is superlatively elegant, harmonious, and pathetic. This observation is not applicable to any other poem of such a length. But this is not its only glorious singularity. The hopes, the fears, the wishes, the raptures, and the agonies of love, were never so naturally and forcibly impressed on the soul by any other eloquence, if we except Rousseau."

Pope is an excellent poet; but this is not a way to lecture on his merits. This is the common-place language, which every miss at a boarding-school could utter, if she had the boldness to acknowledge having read Eloisa to Abelard. Yet we have sought in vain for a more rational and discriminate eulogy on the favourite poet of the last century. The poem of Eloisa does

indeed glow with the finer fires of passion and of feeling. It is his great work; but he is much indebted to Ovid for many of its beauties. There is much in Sappho to Phaon of which Eloisa's warmest and most enchanting passages remind us. Had Mr. Stockdale told us that Eloisa to Abelard is the finest of English love-epistles, we should not make any exception to the expression; had he called it the finest of all epistles ancient or modern, we should have at least understood him; but what he means by saying it is absolutely unrivalled in ancient or modern times, is by no means so easily comprehended. Is it superior to the fourth book of Virgil's Æneid? Is it superior to every thing of every kind in the poetical treasures of Greece and Rome? Were a parallel started between this epistle and some of the finest passages in antiquity, we have no doubt that Mr. Stockdale would decide with as little hesitation, and probably with as much justice, as he devotes Homer to contempt, and all his pedantic admirers. But a modest man is slow in giving, and a reasonable man in believing, these decisions on comparison of old and new writings, especially against the ancients. We shall not therefore believe, either that Homer is inferior to Milton, or that Pope's Eloisa is superior to every thing ancient, merely on Mr. Stockdale's assertion, till we ascertain, with better certainty, that he is competent to draw the comparison. To estimate Pope's value as a poet "by the melancholy chasm, of which feeling hearts would be sensible, if Eloisa's epistle were lost," we confess, exceeds our computing faculty. Our lecturer may have clearer notions on the subject; but there is something in the supposition which perplexes and confuses us. If the feeling hearts recollected the poem, then it could not be lost; and if it was totally lost and forgotten, then they could not be aware that there was any thing so good to lament for.

We are told that Pope unites those excellences which are apparently incompatible. Now superlative terms should always be used with caution, but, above all, when speaking of such a poet as Pope. He is one to be measured by no mean standard. What is good in his poetical character is greatly good; so that, to match one acknowledged quality, that which we bring to prove his uniting with it another great quality, should be striking indeed. Our lecturer has, as usual, left those apparently incompatible excellences undefined. Correctness, which distinguishes Pope as one great excellence, is united with his shrewdness, his wit, and his common sense. There is nothing in these qualities apparently incompatible with correctness. The poetical quality which we should least expect to see united with correctness, is the daring luxuriance of fancy or association which distinguishes Spenser or Shakspeare, and which is found even in Dryden in no scanty degree. But neither this romantic fancy, nor extreme pathos, nor sublimity of the very first order, are discoverable in Pope.

In the midst of this chapter, however unwilling we may be to submit to the universal authority of Dr. Johnson, yet it is quite refreshing to meet with passages of his better sense and more dispassionate decisions, which our author quotes. The sentences of Johnson stand indeed with peculiar advantage in this insulated situation; and Mr. Stockdale is entitled to the same sort of gratitude which we feel to a dull landlord who has invited us to dine with an interesting visitor. In fact, after the one has bewildered us, the other puts us right. It is not easy to add to what Johnson has said; still less should we presume to take away from the truly admirable summary of Pope's character which he has drawn. But when we assent to the *opinions of a superior* mind, we generally find its utterance so conveyed,

that we can assent in a qualified manner, where assent is, on the whole, due, and yet find room for some partial distinction of our own. "If Pope is not a poet," says Johnson, "where is poetry to be found?" This is certainly true; for though the forte of Pope be neither pathos, sublimity, nor daring originality, yet, that he moves the affections, approaches to majesty of thought, and possesses much of his own creation, who shall deny? The indiscriminate praise of our author is, that Pope united apparently inconsistent excellences. Dr. Johnson touches off his picture more rationally, by saying, that he had, in proportions very nicely suited to each other, all the qualities which constitute genius. The excellences of Pope were adjusted by proportion to each other, and not incompatible qualities. "He had invention," Dr. Johnson continues, "by which new trains of ideas are formed, and new scenes of imagery displayed, as in the Rape of the Lock; or extrinsic embellishments and illustrations are connected with a known subject, as in the Essay on Criticism." The adaptation of his Rosicrucian machinery in the Rape of the Lock, is indeed an inventive and happy creation, in the limited sense of the word to which all poetical creation must be restricted. There is no finer gem than this poem in all the *lighter* treasures of English fancy. Compared with any other mock-heroic in our language, it shines in pure supremacy for elegance, completeness, point and playfulness. It is an epic poem in that delightful miniature which diverts us by its mimicry of greatness, and yet astonishes by the beauty of its parts and the fairy brightness of its ornaments. In its kind it is matchless; but still it is but mock-heroic, and depends, in some measure, for effect on a ludicrous reference in our own minds to the veritable heroics whose solemnity it so wittily affects. His aërial puppets of divinity,—his sylphs and gnomes; and heroines,—the beaux and belles of high life, required rather a subtle than a strong hand to guide them through the mazes of poetry. Among inventive poets, this single poem will place him high. But if our language contains any true heroic creations of fancy, the agents of Spenser's and Milton's machinery will always claim a superior dignity to their Lilliputian counterfeits.

"He had imagination," Johnson observes, "which enables him to convey to the reader the various forms of nature, incidents of life, and energies of passion, as in his Eloisa, his Windsor Forest, and his Ethic Epistles." It is true that Pope's imagination could convey the forms of nature; yet many poets have looked upon nature much less through a medium than Pope, and have seen her and painted her in less artificial circumstances. The landscapes of Pope are either such as the tourist would sketch within ten miles of London; or, if he attempted more enchanting scenery, he gives, by his vague and general epithets, only the picture of a picture; he writes more by rote than by conception, like a man who saw nature through the medium of the classics, and not with the naked eye. In vain we shall search his Pastorals, or Windsor Forest, for such a landscape as surrounds the Castle of Indolence, the Bower of Eden, or the inimitable Hermitage of Beattie.

Without defining the picturesque, we all feel that it is a charm in poetry seldom applicable to Pope. In the knowledge and description of refined life, Pope is the mirror of his times. He saw through human character as it rose in the living manners of his age, with the eye of a judge and a satirist; and he must be fond of exceptions, who should say that such a satirist did not understand human nature. Yet, when we use the trite phrase

of Shakspeare understanding human nature, we mean something greatly more extensive than when we apply the same phrase to Pope. From the writings of the former, we learn the secrets of the human heart, as it subsists in all ages, independent of the form and pressure of the times. From Pope we learn its foibles and peculiarities in the 18th century. We have men and women described by Shakspeare; by Pope we have the ladies and gentlemen of England. Whatever distinctions of mental expression and physiognomy the latter delineates, we see those distinctions, whether leaning to vice or virtue, originate partly in nature, but still more in the artificial state of society. The standard of his ridicule and morality is for ever connected with fashion and polite life. Amidst all his wit, it has been the feeling of many in reading him, that we miss the venerable simplicity of the poet in the smartness of the gentleman. To this effect the tune of his versification certainly contributes. Without entering into an enquiry whether his practice of invariably closing up the sense completely within the couplet is right or wrong, it is clear that Pope has made the melody of his general measure as perfect as it can be made by exactness: whether a slight return to negligence might not be preferable to the very acmé of smoothness which he has chosen, is a subject which, interesting as it is, we will not now encroach on the reader's patience by examining.

The Epistle of Eloisa evinces his knowledge of one passion, and his feeling of it, to have been genuine. It is possibly a fair inference from this, that his poetical sympathy could have followed, with the same success, any other of the leading passions or their combinations, and exhibited a picture of the human heart (in Epic poetry for instance), under the influence of other emotions and situations, with the same bold originality as he has portrayed Eloisa. We state this as a fair doubt, from reverence to so great a name, and because the boundaries of a short article make us distrust our power of exactly justifying a contradiction. But, with deference, we state our opinion, that Pope, from his writings, appears to know human nature more as a satirist than a man of feeling; that none of his writings (least of all, his Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady) demonstrate power in the pathetic; that a gay life, of high polish and conversation, while it brightened his wit and pointed his shrewdness, probably diminished the reflective energy of his mind, and made him more observant of foibles than of passions, of manners than of nature in the abstract. There is one sacred passion which nature has ordained to be independent of fashion and artificial manners, for its eternal vehemence. Hence, the poet who may have been limited in observing other secrets of the human bosom, by the greatest bane to originality, an intercourse with the narrow limits of the fashionable world, may, even with that disadvantage, observe and paint the omnipotence of love in all its greatness and simplicity.

From the higher region of poetry, our lecturer seems sensible that he is coming down a considerable step when he proceeds to Young. His general character of him will be acknowledged to be just.

" Nature had bestowed on Young an exuberant, vigorous, and original genius. It was bound less in its versatility; it was inexhaustible in its resources. But its uncommon and splendid qualities were darkened and dishonoured by their opposite characteristics. He has left us many proofs that he could be extremely injudicious; his taste was extremely vitiated He often tires us with what I can term no better than poetical tricks or legerdemain. He is apt to prolong a forcible and shining thought to its debility and its death, by an Ovidian redundance and puerility; and he seems to have exerted the whole stretch and grasp of his mind to unite remote images, and *thoughts which* could never have been associated but by the most elaborate affectation. By an

ted fancy breaking through every pale of judgment, he sometimes loses himself in fustian, imagines that he has attained sublimity."

ne respect, our author puts us in mind of a rower in a boat; he looks ay and proceeds another. In Young we find him treating of Pope, Thomson looking back upon Young. A Johnson or a Croft are ever ion present, to receive some castigation; and are seemingly thrown in y, that he may have the pleasure of kicking them out of it. His ks on Young are, nevertheless, in general judicious, except where he s the minor poems of that author. The prose of Young is clearly appily described by the frequent manliness of its originality, and its que and whimsical decorations.

th higher genius, and with a milder spirit of religion, Thomson adorned ntemporary age of Young, and drew from that, as from the succeed- deeper admiration. Whether the object of poetry be to please, or to the heart, either definition will suit the muse of Thomson. His ation awakens, and almost creates anew, that moral sense which po- l life, and the petty agitations of artificial society, are most apt to obli- ; viz. the sense of beauty in external nature; a principle on which so innocence and happiness depend. Other poets have shown us choice s of nature; Thomson leads us abroad to look at her whole horizon, ll her vicissitudes. He gives us (we might almost say) a separate and nthusiasm for the beauties of creation, which, in other poets, we only y occasions, as the scenery is connected with some transient action or . When we consider the nature of this moral charm in the author of easons, we find a reason for his popularity exceeding that of all other , even those who are not his inferiors in genius. The narrative and atic poets, who appeal to the more tumultuous and palpable passions, d on curiosity for the delight we find in them. When the story is or the drama wound up, it is difficult to bring our curiosity fresh to perusal. But the Seasons present to us imitations of nature, which e delights not merely to visit, but to rest and to muse upon. In the and still nature of the objects, we have time to gather a multitude of ations. There is scarce a reader of Thomson, whose mind will not h recollections in proof of this. The features of nature in Thomson's ption are without vagueness or indistinctness, but still general, and able by association to the particular scenery which is freshest and ntest in the actual remembrance of every individual among the mil- who read him. All descriptive poetry, it is true, possesses, to a certain e, this charm of general applicability to individual association; but it be easily proved that an event and an agent, by being more particular selves, lose, in generality of association, what they gain to the reader riosity and interest. This will not prove that Thomson's poetry yields intense delight in the present perusal, than others of high merit; but, e calmness and permanence of the pleasure, it accounts for our re- ng to it so often.

nidst the profuse and noble praise which Johnson has lavished upon poet, Mr. Stockdale seems highly offended that he should have ven- d to hint at a blemish. Yet, surely, for the sake of taste, and, above for the sake of preserving poetical style free from the most dangerous, use the most fascinating fault, florid and excessive ornament, it may be , with all reverence to Thomson, that he is frequently too exuberant, fills the ear rather than the mind. Many of his epithets are barren

blossoms—gaudy, but unprofitable. Yet, if faults are to be found, they ought also to be distinguished. The faults of Thomson, whether useless epithets or occasional redundance, are not great defects in his poetry. He never provokes us, like Young, with disgust at fustian or nonsense. When Thomson sacrifices a thought to false taste, he only dresses the victim in flowers, and leads it on in procession. Young butchers it outright, and dissects it on the altar. On the subject of Thomson's minor poems, of which some are exquisitely beautiful, and others of unequal merit, we should perhaps do no justice either to Mr. Stockdale's or our own thoughts by entering in the narrow bounds of a short paper; but no admirer of Thomson can forbear to mention his Castle of Indolence—a poem in which there appears an immaculate simplicity, which he had not attained in his Seasons. In the first part, at least, he has realised the idea of perfect poetry. Of the superior purity of Thomson's style in this enchanting production, Mr. Stockdale seems not to be aware. The inequality of the second part of the Castle of Indolence is known and acknowledged; yet one cause of this is perhaps the finished perfection of the first. It was enough; it needed no second part. It resembles the well-known air of pastoral simplicity, to which all the skill of an inventive master could not furnish a second. Yet in the second part, as we have it, what inimitable stanzas are found! The poetry of the Castle of Indolence can only be described in poetry.

SKETCHES OF THE OLD ENGLISH DRAMATISTS.

Marlow.—Shakspeare.—Beaumont and Fletcher.—Massinger.—Ben Jonson.—Middleton.—Marston.—Decker.—Chapman.—Webster.—Ford.—Shirley.—Milton.—Dryden.—Otway.—Southern.—Addison.—Dr. Johnson.—Moore, and Lillo.*

In the history of a nation, the progress and vicissitudes of its literature are but too frequently disregarded. The crowning of kings, and the winning of battles, are recorded with chronological accuracy, and the resources of the country are laid open. The eye of the reader is dazzled with the splendour of courts and the array of armies; the rise and fall of parties—the trial and condemnation of state criminals—the alternations of power and disgrace, are explained to very weariness. But of the quiet conquests of learning there is small account. The philosopher must live in his own page, the poet in his verse; for the national chronicles are almost mute regarding them. The historian's bloody catalogue is not made up of units; but deals only with great assemblages of men—armies, fleets, and senates: the king is the only "*one*" included in the story; but of him, be he a cipher or a tyrant, we are told in a way to satisfy the most extravagant desires of loyalty.

There is in this, we think, an undue preponderance—a preference of show to substance—of might to right. There is at least as much importance to be attached to the acquisition of "Paradise Lost," or "Lear," as to the gaining of an ordinary victory. Accordingly, *we*, profiting by the historian's lapse, and in order to do those ingenious persons (the poets and phi-

* Beddoe's Bride's Tragedy, and Knowles's Virginius.—Vol. xxxviii. p. 177. February, 1823.

losophers) justice, assume the right of tracing, from time to time, *their* histories upon our pages, and of discussing, with something of historic candour, their good qualities and defects.

In contemplating the great scene of literature, the Muses are, beyond doubt, one of the brightest groups; and, among them, those of the *drama* stand out pre-eminent. To quit allegory—it comes more quickly home to the bosoms of men; it is linked more closely to their interest and desires, detailing matters of daily life, and treating, in almost colloquial phrase, of ordinary passions. It is as a double-sided mirror, wherein men see themselves reflected, with all their agreeable pomp and circumstance, but freed of that rough husk of vulgarity which might tempt them to quarrel with their likeness; while the sins of their fellows are stripped and made plain, and they themselves portrayed with unerring and tremendous fidelity.

Certainly dramatic poetry is more quick and decisive in its effects than poetry of any other kind; and this arises partly from its nature, and partly from the circumstances under which it is made public. In the imagination of a person visiting the theatre, there is a predisposition to receive strong impressions. The toil of the day is over, the spirits are exhilarated, and the nerves rendered susceptible by a consciousness of coming enjoyment. All the fences and guards that a man assumes in matters of business or controversy, are laid aside. Even the little caution with which he takes up a book (for we have now got a lurking notion that authors are not infallible) is forgotten: he casts off his care and his prudence, and sets both the past and future at defiance when he enters the limits of a theatre. It is impossible for a person unacquainted with dramatic representation to understand the effect produced on a mixed mass of the people when a striking sentiment is uttered by a popular actor. The conviction is instantaneous. Hundreds of stormy voices are awakened, the spirit of every individual is in arms, and a thousand faces are lighted up, which a moment before seemed calm and powerless;—and this impression is not so transient as may be thought. It is carried home, and nursed till it ripens. It is a germ which blossoms out *into* patriotism, or runs up rank into prejudice or passion. It is intellectual property, honestly acquired; and yet debateable ground, on which disputes may arise, and battles are to be fought hereafter.

Men are often amused, and sometimes instructed, by books. But a tragedy is a great moral lesson, read to two senses at once; and the eye and the ear are both held in alliance to retain the impression which the actor has produced. A narrative poem is perhaps more tempting in its shape than a play, and may fix the attention more deeply in the closet; but it is addressed to a more limited class, and necessarily affects our sympathies less forcibly; for a drama is an embodying of the present, while an epic is only a shadow of the past. We listen, in one case, to a mere relation of facts; but, in the other, the ruin of centuries is swept away, and time annihilated, and we stand face to face with "grey Antiquity." We see and hear things which we thought had departed for ever; but they are (or seem to be) here again—in stature, in gesture, in habit, the same. We become as it were one of a crowd that has vanished; we mix with departed sages and heroes, and breathe the air of Athens, and Cressy, and Agincourt. Men who have been raised to the stars, and whom we have known but by the light of their renown, are made plain to our senses; they stand before us, flesh and blood like ourselves. We are apt to deny our sympathy to old events, when it is asked by the mere historian of the times;

but when the mimic scene is unfolded before us, we are hurried into the living tumult, without the power (or even wish) to resist.

Schlegel, in his acute and learned lectures on "Dramatic Art and Literature," enquires, "*What is dramatic?*" A definition is seldom an easy thing. Although we can understand what is called dramatic writing, it may nevertheless be difficult to define it correctly. It certainly does not consist merely in its shape of dialogue; because dialogue may be, and often is, essentially *un*dramatic. Speeches may be shaped, and separated and allotted, and they may be raised or lowered in expression, as the king, or the merchant, or the beggar, is presented, yet the hue of the author's mind shall pervade them all. Such characters are *not* dramatic; they have no verisimilitude; they are like puppets worked with wires, the mechanism of the brain, but little more. They may startle our admiration, or tease our curiosity, by the ingenuity of the workmanship; but we have no faith in them, and they stimulate us to nothing. In Shakspeare (but he stands in this, as in every thing else, alone), we never see the prejudice of the author peeping out and interfering,—a mistake and an anachronism in the scene. He is the only one who ever had strength enough to cast off the slough of his egotism, and courage enough to lay his vanities aside, and array with the pure light of an independent intellect the most airy creations of the brain. Like the prince in the Arabian fiction, he leaves one shape for another and another, animating each and all by turns; not carrying the complexion, or tone, or diseases of the first, into the body of the second; and yet superior even to that ingenious metempsychosist, whose original love, if we remember aright, remained unaltered through all the changes that he underwent in story.

It is assuredly difficult, and argues more than common disinterestedness, to set aside, of our own accord, our right to be heard, and to become the organ and mouthpiece of a variety of men. To invest ourselves for a time with the prejudices, and even with the very speech, of statesmen and soldiers, kings and counsellors, knaves, idiots, friars, and the like, seems like a gratuitous vexation of the intellect; and yet it must be done. We must give up our privilege to dictate, and lose the opportunity of saying infinitely better things than the parties concerned would utter, if we wish for eminent success in the drama. This is offensive to our self-love; and the truth is, that a vain man can never be a good dramatist. He must *forget himself* before he can do justice to others. We have heard it insisted, that this is neither possible nor desirable. But that it is possible, Shakspeare is a brilliant testimony; and that it is desirable, is equally certain, and, we apprehend, not very difficult of proof. A character (king or peasant) must speak like himself, or like another person, or like no person whomsoever: —which style is the best, we leave to the understanding of the reader. It is true that, without much of that particular faculty which we are inclined to call "dramatic," some authors have contrived to portray one or two characters with success; but these have been generally mere *beaux idéals*, —mere copies or modifications of themselves. Indeed, we have found, on a strict scrutiny, that their opinions might always be seen darkening one character, and their animal spirits gilding another; and that, whether didactic, or disputatious, or jocose, the fluctuation of their own spirit has been manifest through all the shiftings and disguises of their tale.

Schlegel, in reply to his own question of "What is dramatic?" says, that *it does not* consist merely in dialogue, but that it is necessary that such

dialogue should operate a change in the minds of the persons represented. If by this he means that the character itself should be wrought upon and change, we think that this may be desirable; but the *nature* of the drama is a thing different from the result which it ought to arrive at. This assertion of Schlegel is therefore almost like saying, that argument is not sound, (or rather, that it is not argument at all), unless it shall produce conviction. In our own literature, at least, it is certain that we often find the personages at the end of the play in precisely the same state of mind as at the commencement. We make a play a succession and change of *events*, and not a change of sentiment. The sentiment of the hearer is indeed, if possible, to be wrought upon, but not necessarily that of any one character of the drama. The character, in fact, is frequently developed in the first scene, and we have nothing afterwards to learn, except as to what accidents befall it. If the German critic means to say (for he is not very clear), that the tone of the several speeches in a play should be dependent on each other—that the first should give rise to the second, the second the third, and so on, we entirely agree with him: for the bright spirit of dialogue can only be struck out by collision; and if the speech, the answer, and the replication, were mere independent and insulated sayings, each character would utter a series of monologues, and no more.

Shakspeare (as in the case of Macbeth and others) sometimes makes his tragedy an absolute piece of biography, and allows his characters to unfold themselves gradually, act by act: he does not, in truth, often bring forward a ready-made villain, whom we may know at a glance; but we have a map of the march and progress of crime or passion through the human heart: our sympathies are not assulted or taken by surprise, but we move forward, step by step, with the hero of the story, until he perishes before our eyes. This is undoubtedly the perfection of the drama; but it exists in its weakness as well as in its strength; and even in Shakspeare, Iago is much the same person in the fifth act as he is in the first scene, and Richard undergoes little, if any, alteration.

If we were driven to a definition, we should say, that a good drama is "a story told by action and dialogue, where the spirit and style of the speeches allotted to each character are well distinguished from the others, and are true to that particular character and to nature." It must involve a story (or event), or it will not have the strength and stature of a drama; for that is not a collection of scenes loosely hung together without object, but a gradual detail of one or more facts in a regular and natural way. It must have action, or it cannot be fit for representation; and dialogue, or it would be but narration. The speeches must possess character and distinction, without which a play would be monotonous, and like the voice of a single instrument breathed through different tubes of one diameter: and that those speeches should be true to the characters to which they are assigned and (as a consequence) to nature, must be presumed, until we can show that nature is wrong, or can find a brighter model to imitate.

The earliest dramatic amusements of modern times (they were common to Italy, and Spain, and England), were of a religious nature, and with us passed under the name of "Mysteries." In these, which were stories taken from the Bible and Testament, the characters were sustained by monks, or boys attached to ecclesiastical establishments; and, indeed, the literary part of the Mysteries (such as it is) must have sprung from the same source.

Much discussion has occurred among our industrious and inquisitive brethren in learning, as to whether our drama is of foreign or English growth. Something plausible may no doubt be urged on each side of the question; but we must rest on circumstantial proof at last; and, after all, the discovery would scarcely compensate for the pains that must be bestowed on the enquiry, for the subject itself is not very important to the interests even of the drama.

Some derive our dramatic literature at once from the tragedies of the ancient Greeks; some from the comparatively modern entertainments which the Jews and early Christians were accustomed to exhibit at Constantinople (Byzantium) and elsewhere; others say that it originated at fairs in the ingenuity of the itinerant dealers, who thus exerted their wits to draw people and purchasers together; while the rest (without referring to this origin) contend only that it is of pure English growth, and has no connection with any that we have mentioned, nor even with the Mysteries of Italy or Spain. Schlegel himself is, if we remember correctly, of this last opinion.

Now, we can scarcely suppose that our earlier writers were indebted to the classic Grecian models; for the "Mysteries" have been traced back as far as the twelfth century; and Chaucer, in the fourteenth century, speaks of "plays of miracles;" at which time we are not aware that the Greek dramatists were known in England. But there is a better reason still against this supposed derivation, which is, that the early English performances bear no resemblance whatever to the tragedies of the Greeks. The latter are fine and polished entertainments, discussing matters of daily life, or immortalising events in their own history; while the former are meagre didactic matters, taken solely from sacred history, and destitute of the chorus, which forms so striking a feature in the character of the Grecian plays. Had our forefathers imitated Sophocles, or Euripides, or Æschylus, it is but fair to suppose that they would have imitated them entirely; for the state of the nation was not at the point to suggest *selections* from their style, nor to justify any deviation from their successful system. We must therefore conclude, that the ancient Grecians had little to do (nothing directly) with the birth of our English drama.

As to the opinion that it began in mimic and buffoonery at fairs, we cannot understand why, if this was the case, the subjects should be of so serious a cast. It is not reasonable to suppose that the wandering merchants of the time would strive to attract purchasers by laying before them some signal instance of God's vengeance. If they had mimicked any thing, it would have been the manners or follies of the time, the gesture or the gait of individuals, or things that were in themselves obviously susceptible of mirth, and readily to be understood by the spectators. But we see nothing of this in the earliest specimens of the English dramatic writers; and without this we cannot well accede to the opinions of Warton or Schlegel, and think that our drama had no connexion with that of foreign countries. In the first place, our English Mysteries were essentially like those of Gregory Nazianzen and the modern Italians. We had intercourse with Italy and Constantinople; and it is known that the stories of Boccaccio and his countrymen had been brought into England in the time of Chaucer.

If there had not been so decided a resemblance, in point of subject, between the "Mysteries" of England and the sacred dramas of Italy and modern Greece, we should have felt inclined to adopt the opinion of Schlegel. It is known that the same ingenious discoveries have been made

ent parts of the world which had no acquaintance with each other; would have been but equitable to have given the English credit for of their own invention. But, to say the truth, the earliest speci- f English plays do not look like inventions; they are at once too te for originals, and too rude to be considered as copies from the d dramas of Sophocles and his contemporaries. The first attempt natic writing would naturally be in the form of a monodrame, or a colloquy, and not a drama with all its principal and subordinate lustrating a fact in history. It is said, indeed, that the Mysteries omposed by the monks, for the purpose of supplanting more vulgar inments of a similar nature; yet the fact of no such entertainments come down to us, may well excite some scepticism; for the person e of inventing a drama would also, we should think, be able to it. It is true, that the most ancient entertainment at Naples is , who has descended, by tradition only, from father to son, and still his place of popularity, in defiance both of improvement and innova- But Punch was not the origin of the Italian drama; nor would the his having been so, or of his resemblance to our fair mimicry, alter estion as to the invention of the English "Mysteries." After all, ver, the matter is not important, and scarcely worth the very small sion which we have bestowed upon it.

"*Moralities*," which followed, grew out of the old "Mystery," and he natural offspring of such a parent. They were mere embodyings vices and virtues; and though dressed up after a barbarous fashion, some approach to the models of the ancient Greeks; at least in the of their *dramatis personæ*. "Death,—Kindred,—Strength,—Dis- , and others, for instance, which occur in the old Morality of ryman," came nearer to the personages in the Prometheus of Æschy- in the nature of the "Mysteries," would allow; and in the Morality usty Juventus," the persons of "Knowledge,—Good Councell,— the Devyll," and others, explain at once the nature of their offices, e entertainment they are likely to afford. These compositions (espe- the Morality called "Hycke-Scorner") possess occasional gleams of tic spirit; but, generally speaking, they have little of that quality what is discoverable in the romances and narrative poems of the eriod.

first regular English comedy, "Gammer Gurton's Needle," in every a very remarkable performance, is said to have been written in the 551; and if that statement be correct, the first English tragedy, ex and Porrex," which was the joint composition of Sackville, Lord urst, and Thomas Norton, was written in the same year. Our ss is not now with the comedy. With regard to the latter drama, markable rather for its even style and negative merits, than for any illiant or sterling quality. It has none of the rudeness of the dramas preceded and followed it, but stands by itself, an elegant instance of crity in writing. Without extravagance or flagrant error—without ry, or any of the offensive trash that disgraced those days, it is heless mournfully deficient in spirit and dramatic character. The hue authors' minds pervades the whole like a gloom. When Pope praised agedy for "the propriety of sentiments, and gravity of style," etc. ssential to tragedy," and which, he says, "Shakspeare himself per- ly neglected, or little understood," he proves to us nothing but that

he did not understand dramatic writing. Even Milton (and we say this very reluctantly), seems to have had an imperfect idea of true tragedy, when he calls the Greek writers "unequalled," and proposes them as models, in preference to our own great and incomparable poet. We have little to object to the "propriety" of Lord Buckhurst's sentiments, and nothing to the "gravity" of his style. These things are very good, no doubt; but we have nothing else. There is no character—no variety, which is the soul of dramatic writing. What Lord Buckhurst says might as well be said in a narrative or didactic poem,—in a sermon, or an essay. But in a play, we want true and vivid portraits; we want the life and spirit of natural dialogue; we want "gravity of style" occasionally, but we also want fancy, and even folly: we want passion in all its shapes, and madness in its many moods, and virtue and valour,—not dressed up in allegory, nor tamed down to precept, but true and living examples of each, with all the varieties and inflections of human nature,—not too good for us to profit by, nor too bad for us to dread. Now, we have little of this in "Ferrex and Porrex." The play is sterile in character, and, with all its good sense, is a dead and dull monotony. The following is one of the most favourable passages; but it will nevertheless afford a fair specimen of the style in which the whole is written. Hermon (a parasite) is addressing the king.

——"If the fear of Gods, and secret grudge
Of Nature's law, repining at the fact,
Withhold your courage from so great attempt,
Know ye that lust of kingdoms hath no law,
The Gods do bear, and well allow in kings
The things that they abhor in rascal routes.
When kings on slender quarrels run to wars,
And then, in cruel and unkindly wise,
Commend thefts, rapes, murder of innocents,
The spoil of towns, ruins of mighty realms,
Think you such princes do suppose themselves
Subject to laws of kind, and fear of Gods?
Murders and violent thefts in private men
Are heinous crimes, and full of foul reproach;
Yet no offence, and deck'd with glorious name
Of noble conquests in the hands of kings."—Act. ii. sc. 1.

We have taken no liberty with this very edifying counsel, except that of altering the ancient spelling. The doctrine requires as little assistance.

After Lord Sackville followed *Edwards*, who, in 1571, wrote "The Comedy of Damon and Pythias." It has, notwithstanding its title, some things of tragedy in it; but the serious parts are nearly worthless. The style is rude and bad enough, and the play is filled with anachronisms and inconsistencies; but there is an attempt at character in one or two of the persons of the drama, which serves in some small measure to redeem it. Aristippus is an instance of a philosopher turned courtier; and Carisophus is a specimen of the parasite plant, which we can easily suppose flourished and multiplied as readily at the foot of Ætna, as on the banks of the Seine or the Thames, or on the shores of the sea of Archangel. About the same time with Edwards lived and wrote Thomas *Preston*, the author of "Cambises, king of Persia." This tragedy is remarkable only for its having been referred to, as is supposed, by Shakspeare in "Henry the Fourth." The "vein" of Cambises, however, is but a sorry vein; and is more dull than extravagant. It would probably long since have been forgotten, but for Falstaff's allusion. *Whetstone*, the author of Promos and Cassandra, is scarcely worth a mention, unless it be that Shakspeare has borrowed his

t of "Measure for Measure" from him; neither is *Kyd*, who "Soliman and Perseda, and "The Spanish Tragedy." We say this supposition that some other was the author of the scene in the play, where Hieronimo is discovered mad. There is in that scene, d, a wild and stern grief, painted with fearful strength, which we must together pass over. The following short extract is powerful and fine.

The Painter enters.

"*Paint.* God bless you, sir.
Hier. Wherefore? why, thou scornful villain?
How, where, or by what means should I be blest?
Isab. What would'st thou have, good fellow?
Paint. Justice, madam.
Hier. Oh! ambitious beggar, would'st thou have that
That lives not in the world?
Why, all the undelved mines cannot buy
An ounce of Justice, 'tis a jewel so inestimable.
I tell thee, God hath engross'd all justice in his hands,
And there is none but what comes from him.
Paint. Oh! then I see that God must right me for
My murder'd son.
Hier. How, was thy son murder'd?
Paint. Ay, sir: no man did hold a son so dear.
Hier. What! not as thine? that's a lie
As massy as the earth: I had a son
Whose least unvalued hair did weigh
A thousand of thy sons, and he was murder'd.
Paint. Alas! sir, I had no more but he.
Hier. Nor I, nor I: but this same one of mine
Was worth a legion. But all is one; Pedro,
Jaques, go in a doors, Isabella, go,
And this good fellow here, and I
Will range this hideous orchard up and down
Like two she lions reaved of our young."

sides these, there are some others who may be said to have flourished e the time of Shakspeare—*Wilmot*, who wrote "Tancred and Gis- le"—*Greene*, the author of "James the Fourth"—*Legge*, who is said ve written "Richard the Third"—the celebrated John *Lily* the Euphuist orge *Peele*, who wrote "David and Bethsabe," and "Mahomet and n," and some other dramas; and last, but not least, Christopher ow (for Lilly's plays can scarcely be considered within the limit of our ct) may be passed over without further mention. The lines of Peele weet and flowing, but they have little imagination and no strength; and without a notion of dialogue. He would have written pastorals per- smoothly and pleasantly, but the passions were altogether above him. of his plays, "Mahomet and Hiron," is probably the source from which nt Pistol has derived a portion of his learning. David and Bethsabe nds us of the Old Mysteries: its style, however, is different, and it has lines that have undoubtedly great beauty. In Bethsabe's apostrophe e air, she says—

"Deck thyself in loose robes,
And on thy wings bring delicate perfumes"—

h is delicacy itself; nor can the following lines in the same play (de- ing a fountain) be denied the merit of being extremely graceful:—

"The brim let be embraced with golden curls
Of moss that sleeps with sounds the waters make,
With joy to feed the fount with their recourse:
Let all the grass that beautifies her bower
Bear manna every morn instead of dew;
Or let the dew be sweeter far than that
That hangs like chains of pearl on Hermon hill."

But *Marlow* was undoubtedly the greatest tragic writer that preceded Shakspeare. The spirit of extravagance seems to have dwelt in his brain, and to have impelled him on to the most extraordinary feats: but his muse had a fiery wing, and bore him over the dark and unhallowed depths of his subject in a strong and untiring flight. This poet is less remarkable for his insight into human character, than for his rich and gloomy imagination, and his great powers of diction,—for whether stately, or terrible, or tender, he excels in all. His "mighty line" was famous in his own time, and cannot be denied even now: yet he could stoop from the heights of a lawless fancy, or the dignity of solemn declamation, to words of the softest witchery. He certainly loved to wander from the common track, and dash at once into peril and mystery; and this daring it was which led him naturally to his sublimity and extravagance. Unfortunately Marlow is never content with doing a little, nor even with doing enough; but he fills the cup of horror till it overflows. There is a striking instance of this in his tragedy of "Lust's Dominion," which seems written from a desire to throw off a tormenting load of animal spirits. There is a perpetual spurning at restraints, a warring with reason and probability, throughout the whole of the play. Eleazar, the Moor, is a mad savage, who should have been shut up in a cage, and the queen, his paramour, with him; and the whole dialogue (though there are some strong well-sustained passages) is as unequal and turbulent as the characters.

Of all the plays of Marlow, "Faustus" is the finest, and "Edward the Second" perhaps the most equal. The "Jew of Malta" we cannot admire, (though there is in it certainly the first hint of Shylock); and Tamburlaine, generally speaking, is either fustian or frenzy. However, the poet's idea of the horses of the sun—

> "That blow the morning from their nostrils,"

is magnificent, and his description of Tamburlaine's person

> "(Such breadth of shoulders as might mainly bear
> Old Atlas' burden"—)

recalls, not unpleasantly, to our mind the description of the great "second spirit" of Milton.* "Faustus" is the story of a learned man who sells himself to the devil, on condition of having unlimited power on earth for twenty-four years; and Mephostophilis (a spirit) is given to him as a slave. These two worthies pass from place to place, enjoying themselves in feastings and love, and triumphs of various kinds; and, by the aid of Lucifer, they beat priests and abuse the pope to his face, and commit similar enormities, in defiance of "*maledicats*" and other formidable weapons of church construction. There are many single lines and phrases in this play which might be selected as incontestable evidence that Marlow was, in felicity of thought and strength of expression, second only to Shakspeare himself. (As a dramatist, however, he is inferior to others.) Some of his turns of thought are even like those of our matchless poet; as when he speaks of

> ——"unwedded maids
> Shadowing more beauty in their airy brows
> Than have the white breasts of the queen of love;"

---

* "With Atlantean shoulders fit to bear
The weight of mightiest monarchies."

or of a temple

> " That *threats* the stars with her aspiring top;"

and where he refers to a man who has an amiable soul,

> " If sin by custom grow not into nature"—

and many others. But Faustus's death is the most appalling thing in the play. It is difficult, however, to give the reader an idea of it by a brief extract—he must read it with its " pomp and circumstance" about it. Faustus is to die at twelve, and the clock has already struck eleven. He groans forth his last speech, which begins thus—

> " O Faustus!
> Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
> And then thou must be damn'd perpetually.
> Stand still, you ever moving spheres of heaven,
> That Time may cease, and Midnight never come!
> Fair Nature's eye, rise—rise again, and make
> Perpetual day; or let this hour be but
> A year—a month—a week—a natural day—
> That Faustus may repent, and save his soul," &c.

And now, to pass from the terrible to the gentle, nothing can be more soft than the lines which he addresses to the Vision of Helen, whom he requires to pass before him when he is in search of a mistress. He is smitten at once by her excelling beauty and thus he speaks :—

> " Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,
> And burnt the topless towers of Ilium!—
> Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss—
> Her lips suck forth my soul . . . .
> Here will I dwell, for Heaven is in these lips,
> And all is dross that is not Helena.
> I will be Paris, and for love of thee
> Instead of Troy shall Wittenburg be sack'd,
> And I will combat with weak Menelaus,
> And wear thy colours on my plumed crest.
> —Oh! thou art fairer than the evening air,
> Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars;
> Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter,
> When he appear'd to hapless Semele;
> More lovely than the monarch of the sky
> In wanton Arethusa's azure arms,
> And none but thou shall be my paramour."—

Following Marlow, but far outshining him and all others in the vigour and variety of his mighty intellect, arose the first of all poets, whether in the East or West—SHAKSPEARE. He had, it is true, many contemporaries, whose names have since become famous,—men who slept for a time in undisturbed obscurity, and who are at last brought forward to illustrate the fashion of their time, and to give bright evidence of its just renown. Yet there is not one worthy of being raised to a comparison with Shakspeare himself. One had a lofty fancy, another a deep flow of melodious verse, another a profound reach of thought; a fourth caught well the mere manners of the age, while others would lash its vice or laud its proud deeds, in verse worthy of the acts which they recorded; but Shakspeare surpassed them all. In the race of fame he was foremost, and alone. He was, beyond all doubt or competition, the first writer of his age or nation. He illuminated the land in which he lived, like a constellation. There were, as we have said, other bright aspects, which cast a glory upon the world of letters; but

he alone had that *radiating* intellect which extended all ways, and penetrated all things, scattering the darkness of ignorance that rested on his age, while it invigorated its spirit and bettered the heart. He was witty, and humorous, and tender, and lofty, and airy, and profound, beyond all men who have lived before or since. He had that particular and eminent faculty, which no other tragic writer perhaps ever possessed, of divesting his subject altogether of himself. He developed the characters of men, but never intruded himself amongst them. He fashioned figures of all colours and shapes and sizes; but he did not put the stamp of egotism upon them, nor breathe over each the sickly hue of his own opinion. They were fresh and strong, beautiful or grotesque, as occasion asked,—or they were blended and compounded of different metals, to suit the various uses of human life; and thus cast, he sent them forth amongst mankind to take their chance for immortality.

The contemporaries of Shakspeare were great and remarkable men. They had winged imaginations, and made lofty flights. They saw above, below, or around; but they had not the taste or discrimination which he possessed, nor the same extensive vision. They drew correctly and vividly for particular aspects, while he towered above his subject, and surveyed it on all sides, from "top to toe." If some saw farther than others, they were dazzled at the riches before them, and grasped hastily, and with little care. They were perplexed with that variety which he made subservient to the general effect. They painted a portrait—or two—or three only, as though afraid of confusion. He, on the other hand, managed and marshalled all. His characters lie like strata of earth, one under another; or, to use his own expression, "matched in mouth like bells,—each under each." We need only look to the plays of Falstaff, where there are wits and rogues and simpletons of a dozen shades,—Falstaff, Hal, Poins, Bardolph, Nym, Pistol, Hostess, Shallow, Silence, Slender,—to say nothing of those rich recruits, equal only to a civil war. Now, no one else has done this, and it must be presumed that none have been able to do it; Marlow, Marston, Webster, Decker, Jonson, Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher—a strong phalanx, yet none have proved themselves competent to so difficult a task.

It has been well said, that it is not so much in one faculty that Shakspeare excelled his fellows, as in that wondrous combination of talent, which has made him, beyond controversy, eminent above all.* He was as universal as the light, and had riches countless. The Greek dramatists are poor in the comparison. The gloom of Fate hung over their tragedies, and they spoke by the oracle. They have indeed too much of the monotony of their skies; but our poet, while he had the brightness of the summer months, was as various as the April season, and as fickle and fantastic as May.

It is idle to say that the characters of writers cannot be discovered from their works. There is sure to be some betrayal,— (Shakspeare is a wonderful and single exception in his dramatic works, but he has written others) —there is always some mark of vanity, or narrow bigotry, or intolerant pride, when either of these vices darken or contract the poet's heart: there is some moment when he who is querulous will complain, and he who is misanthropic will pour out his hate; but passing by the dramas, in which, however, there is no symptom of any personal failings, there is nothing to

* See Mr. Hazlitt's Essay on the characters of Shakspeare.

be found in all his lyrical writings, save only a little repining; and this the malice of his stars may well excuse. The poets and wits of modern times would, we suspect, spurn at the servitude which Shakspeare wore out with patience. But he, rich as he was in active faculty, possessed also the passivevirtue of endurance—the philosophy which enabled him to meet misfortune, and to bear up against the accidents of poverty and of the time. It is to the eternal honour of Lord Southampton, that he could distinguish in some measure the worth of our matchless poet, and that he had generosity enough to honour and reward it. So much has been written and said on Shakspeare, that we will not add further to the enormities of criticism. He breathes like a giant under the loads of rubbish which his pigmy critics and commentators have flung upon him. One good editor, with a reasonable knowledge of the manners and diction of the times, would do the world a service by casting aside nine-tenths of the barren dissertation that has been wasted on the subject, and which now remains, like a ***caput mortuum***, weighing down the better text of our greatest poet.

After Shakspeare, ***Beaumont*** and ***Fletcher*** have altogether the highest claims to considerations. For, though Ben Jonson was more eminent in some respects, and Massinger better in others, they were, as serious dramatic poets, decidedly superior to both. It is difficult to separate Beaumont from Fletcher; especially as all the plays wherein the former had a share are not certainly known. Beaumont is said to have had the better judgment (to have "brought the ballast of judgment"), and Fletcher the livelier and more prolific fancy; but as the latter was the sole author of the "Faithful Shepherdess," "Valentinian," "Rule a Wife and Have a Wife," and "The Two Noble Kinsmen,"* besides being concerned jointly with Beaumont in some of the most serious plays which pass under their joint names, he is entitled on the whole to the greatest share of our admiration. An excellent critic has said of Fletcher, that he was "mistrustful of nature." We think rather that he was careless of her. He lets his Muse run riot too often. There is no symptom of timidity about him (if that be meant): he never stands on the verge of a deep thought, curbing his wit for propriety's sake. On the contrary, he seems often not to know where to stop. Hence it is that his style becomes dilated, and has sometimes an appearance of effeminacy.

If we may believe the portraits of Fletcher, there was something flushed and sanguine in his personal complexion. His eye had a fiery and eager look; his hair inclined to red; and his whole appearance is restless, and, without being heavy, is plethoric. And his verse is like himself. It is flushed and full of animal spirit. It has as much of this as Marlow's had; but there is not the same extravagance, and scarcely the same power, which is to be found in the verse of the elder dramatist. Fletcher, however, had a great deal of humour, and a great deal of sprightliness. There is a buoyancy in his language that is never perceptible in Massinger, nor even in the shrewder scenes of Ben Jonson;—but he had not a wit like Shakspeare, nor a tithe of his ethereal fancy. There is always something ***worldly*** in Fletcher, and the other poets of his time, which interferes with their airest abstractions, and drags down the wings of their Muse. We see it in the "Witch" of Middleton, in the "Faithful Shepherdess" of Fletcher and

* "The Two Noble Kinsmen" is said to have been written by Fletcher and *Shakspeare;* and the early part of the play certainly betrays marks of the great master hand, or else an imitation so exquisite, as to cause our regret that it was not more frequently attempted.

others; whereas we do not feel it in "The Tempest," nor in "Macbeth," disturbing our delusion; and Oberon and Titania and her crew, even when they mix with the "rude mechanicals,"

"Who work for bread upon Athenian stalls,"—

remain to us a golden dream. They meet by moonlight upon the haunted shores of Athens, to make sport with human creatures, to discuss their tiny jealousies, to submit even to the thraldom of an earthly passion; but they still keep up their elfin state, from first to last, unsoiled by any touch of mortality.

Before we part with Fletcher, we shall give the reader a passage from his tragedy of "Philaster," that will illustrate, more than any thing we can say, both his merits and defects. Bellario (a girl in disguise) addresses the king of Sicily, on behalf of his daughter (Arethusa), who has just been married clandestinely to Philaster. The young couple come in as masquers; and thus the boy-girl intercedes:—

"Right royal sir, I should
Sing you an epithalamium of these lovers,
But having lost my best airs with my fortunes,
And wanting a celestial harp to strike
This blessed union on, thus in glad story
I give you all. These two fair cedar branches,
The noblest of the mountain, where they grew
Straightest and tallest, under whose still shades
The worthier beasts have made their layers, and slept
Free from the Sirian star, and the fell thunder-stroke,
Free from the clouds, when they were big with humour,
And deliver'd
In thousand spouts their issues to the earth:—
Oh! there was none but silent Quiet there;
Till never pleased Fortune shot up shrubs,
Base under-brambles, to divorce these branches;
And for a while they did so:—
And now a gentle gale hath blown again,
And made these branches meet and twine together,
Never to be divided.—The God, that sings
His holy numbers over marriage beds,
Hath knit their noble hearts, and here they stand
Your children, mighty king; and I have done."

With regard to *Massinger*, there can be no doubt, we think, that he was decidedly inferior to Fletcher as a poet; but that he was a more equal writer is very possible, and he had perhaps as great a share of the mere dramatic faculty. His verse has been celebrated for its flow, we believe, by Dr. Ferriar; but we cannot, we confess, perceive much beauty in it. It is not rugged and harsh, but it wants music, nevertheless; it runs in a tolerably regular current, but it has seldom or never any felicitous modulations. Massinger himself has not much of the fluctuation of genius. We would not be understood to say that carelessness is the necessary concomitant of talent, but merely that Massinger rarely rises much beyond the level on which he sets out. He is less accessible to passion than Fletcher and others, and is not often either very elevated or very profound. His imagination does not soar, like Marlow's, nor penetrate, like the dark subtle power of Webster. He has strength, however, and sometimes great majesty of diction. He builds up a character to a stately height, although he does not often endow it with the turns and vacillations of humanity. "Sforza" is the best which occurs to us at this moment, and is in some *measure an* exception to our opinion. We do not see any thing improba-

ble in his conduct, more than is justified by the irregularities of human nature. His wild admiration and fierce injunctions are sufficiently consistent; and the way in which he rises upon us, from being the slave of a woman's beauty to the height of a hero and philosopher, has always attracted our deep regard. His return, and his remorse, too, are all in character; and though Massinger's forte is by no means the pathetic, the death of Sforza is full of pathos. He sighs forth this breath thus—

> " Yet I will not die raging; for, alas!
> My whole life was a frenzy.—
> Bury me with Marcelia,
> And let our epitaphs be"——

and here death cuts short his saying; but the unfinished accents are more touching than the most elaborate and highly strained completion.

We think of ***Ben Jonson,*** almost as a matter of course, when we name Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger. He was not equal to his companions in tragedy; but he was superior to them, and perhaps to almost all others, in his terse, shrewd, sterling, vigorous, comic scenes. He had a faculty between wit and humour (but more nearly allied to the latter), which has not been surpassed. His strokes were sometimes as subtle as Shakspeare's; but his arrowy wit was not feathered. His humour was scarcely so broad and obvious as Fletcher's; but it was more searching, and equally true. His tragedies were inferior to his comedies. He had a learned eye, and set down good things from the book; but he relies upon facts (if we may so speak) instead of Nature, and they do not provide for all the dilemmas to which his heroes are reduced.

Of ***Middleton*** it may be said, that he had a high imagination, and was an observer of manners and character; and that his verse was rich, being studded with figures and bright conceits. His play of the "Witch" is supposed by Stevens to have preceded Macbeth; and, if so, there can be no doubt but that Shakspeare made use of it. The relative merits of his witches and those of Shakspeare have already been decided by Mr. Charles Lamb to our satisfaction. As a play, we prefer, on the whole, our author's "Women Beware of Women." Leontio's speech, when he is returning home to his young wife, is a fine compliment to marriage.

Marston was more of a satirist than a dramatic writer. He was harsh in his style, and cynical and sceptical in his ideas of human nature. Nevertheless he was a deep and bold thinker; and he might have filled the office of a court jester, with all the privileges of a motley, for he could whip a folly well. He held up the mirror to vice, but seldom or never to virtue. He had little imagination, and less dilatation, but brings his ideas at once to a point. A fool or a braggart he could paint well, or a bitter wit: but he does little else; for his villains are smeared over, and his good people have no marks of distinction upon them. Yet there are a few touches of strange pathos in the midst of his satires; but they arise from the depth of the sentiment, rather than from the situation of things, or from any strength of passion in the speaker, either of love or pity or despair. Marston appears to us like a man who, having outlived the hopes of a turbulent youth, has learned nothing but that evil is a great principle of human nature, and mingles sparingly the tenderness of past recollections with the bitter consciousness of existing ill.

Decker had a better notion of character than most of his contemporaries: but he had not the poignancy of Marston, and scarcely the imagination of

Middleton, and fell short of the extravagant power and towering styl Marlow. Perhaps, however, he had more of the qualities of a good d matist than either. He understood the vacillations of the human m His men and women did not march to the end of the drama without tu ing to the right or to the left; but they gave themselves up to nature their passions, and let us pleasantly into some of the secrets and incon tencies of the actual world. His portraits of Mattheo and Bellafront (ticularly the former), of Friscobaldo and Hypolito, are admirable. H almost the only writer (even in his great time) who permits circumsta to have their full effect upon persons, and to turn them from the patl which they set out. He did not torture facts to suit a preconceived c racter; but varied the character according to events. He knew that t inconsistent and to change was natural to man (and woman), and a accordingly. As a specimen of the style of Decker, the reader may the following extract. The Duke (of Milan) and his Doctor and serv are waiting for the revival of Infelicia, who has been thrown, by opia into a sleep.

"*Duke.* Uncurtain hero
Softly, sweet doctor . . . . You call'd
For music, did you not? Oh, ho! it speaks,
It speaks. Watch, sirs, her waking; note those sands.
Doctor, sit down. A dukedom that should weigh
Mine own twice down, being put into one scale,
And that fond desperate boy Hypolito
Making the weight up, should not (at my hands)
Buy her i' the other, were her state more light
Than hers who makes a dowry up with alms.
Doctor,—I'll starve her on the Apennine,
Ere he shall marry her. I must confess
Hypolito is nobly born; a man,
Did not mine enemy's blood boil in his veins.
Servant. She wakes, my lord.
Duke. Look, Doctor Benedict.
I charge ye, on your lives, maintain for truth
Whate'er the Doctor or myself aver.
Infel. Oh! God,—what fearful dreams!
Servant. Lady!
Duke. Girl!
Why, Infelicia!—how is 't now? ha,—speak!
Infel. I'm well. What makes this doctor here?—I'm well.
Duke. Thou wert not so, e'en now. Sickness' pale hand
Laid hold on thee, e'en in the dead of feasting;
And when a cup, crown'd with thy lover's health,
Had touch'd thy lips, a sensible cold dew
Stood on thy cheeks, as if that Death had wept
To see such beauty alter'd."

Chapman (the translator of Homer) was a grave and solid writer; he did not possess much skill in tragedy; and in his dramas at least, not show the same poetic power as some of his rivals. Nevertheless he a fine pedant, a stately builder of verse. In his best-known tragedy, "B d'Ambois," his hero will receive no human help when dying, but says

"Prop me, true sword, as thou hast ever done.
The equal thought I bear of life and death
Shall make me faint on no side: I am up
Here like a Roman statue: I will stand
Till Death hath made me marble. Oh! my fame,
Live, in despite of murder. Take thy wings,
And haste thee where the grey-eyed Morn perfumes
Her rosy chariot with Sabæan spices;
Fly where the Evening, from Iberian vales,
Takes on her swarthy shoulders Hecaté
Crown'd with a grove of oaks:

And tell them all that D'Ambois now is hasting
To the eternal dwellers."

Webster was altogether of a different stamp. He was an unequal writer; full of a gloomy power, but with touches of profound sentiment and the deepest pathos. His imagination rioted upon the grave, and frenzy and murder and 'loathed Melancholy' were in his dreams. A common calamity was beneath him, and ordinary vengeance was too trivial for his Muse. His pen distilled blood; and he was familiar with the hospital and the charnel-house, and racked his brain to outvie the horrors of both. His visions were not of heaven, nor of the air; but they came, dusky and earthy, from the tomb; and the madhouse emptied its cells to do justice to the closing of his fearful stories. There are few passages, except in Shakspeare, which have so deep a sentiment as the following. Ferdinand, Duke of Calabria, has caused his sister (the duchess of Malfy) to be murdered by Bosola, his creature. They are standing by the dead body.

" *Bosol.* Fix your eye here.
Fer. Constantly.
Bosol. Do you not weep?—
Other sins only speak: Murther cries out:
The element of water moistens the earth;
But blood flies upwards, and bedews the heavens.
Fer. Cover her face: mine eyes dazzle. She died young!
Bosol. I think not so: her infelicity
Seem'd to have years too many.
Fer. She and I were twins:
And should I die this instant, I had lived
Her time to a minute."

We would not be supposed to assert that this writer was without his faults. On the contrary, he had several;—he had a too gloomy brain, a distempered taste; he was sometimes harsh, and sometimes dull; but he had great sentiment, and not unfrequently great vigour of expression. He was like Marlow, with this difference—that as Marlow's imagination was soaring, so, on the other and, was his penetrating and profound. The one rose to the stars, the other plunged to the centre; equally distant from the bare common-places of the earth, they sought for thoughts and images in clouds and depths, and arrived, by different means, at the same great end. ***Rowley*** and ***Field*** are respectable names of this period; but, as they generally wrote in conjunction with others, we will not attempt to give them an independent reputation. We must not forget, however, that the former was the author of " The Witch of Edmonton," and bore for some time the credit of " The Parliament of Love."

Ford is sufficiently peculiar in his talent, as well as his style, to call for a separate mention. His principal play of " 'Tis Pity She's a Whore," betrays great powers of pathos, and much sweetness of versification; but they should not have been wasted on such a subject. We are not persons to put the Tragic Muse in fetters, nor to imprison her within very circumscribed limits; but there are subjects (be they fact or fiction) which are nauseous to all except distempered minds. There can be no good gained by running counter to the tastes and opinions of *all* society. There is no truth elicited, no moral enforced; and the boundaries of human knowledge can scarcely he said to be enlarged by anatomising monstrous deformities, or expatiating upon the hideous anomalies of the species. Ford has not much strength or knowledge of character; nor has he much depth of sentiment, except in portraying the passion of love. In that, however, he

excels almost all his contemporaries. He is remarkable, also, for his pathetic powers; yet scarcely for poetry, although his verse is generally sweet and tender. Some parts of the "Broken Heart" are as finely written as Fletcher, and Penthea herself (the true heroine, after all—a pale passion-flower) exquisitely drawn. The scene, however, in "'Tis Pity She's a Whore," where Giovanoni murders Annabella, is the finest thing that Ford has done; and there he will stand a comparison with any one, except Shakspeare himself. *Tourneur* was the author of one or two tragedies of exceeding merit. He belonged to the age of Fletcher, and Jonson, and Decker, and was worthy of it: but his faculty, though excellent in itself, had not such a peculiar cast as to call for a separate mention. He deserved more, however, than the couplet with which one of his contemporaries has libelled his memory:—

> "His fame unto that pitch was only raised,
> As not to be despised, nor over-praised."

The "*Revenger's*" and "*Atheist's Tragedies*" should have saved him from this.

Shirley was a writer of about the same calibre as Ford, but with less pathos. And he was, moreover, the last of that bright line of poets whose glory has run thus far into the future, and must last as long as passion, and profound thought, and fancy, and imagination, and wit, shall continue to be honoured. There may be a change of fashions, and revolutions of power; but the empire of intellect will always remain the same. There is a lofty stability in genius, a splendour in a learned renown, which no clouds can obscure or extinguish. The politician and his victories may pass away, and the discoveries in science be eclipsed; but the search of the poet and the philosopher is for immutable Truth, and their fame will be, like their object, immortal.

We have now done with the ancients. We have endeavoured to trace, as well as we could, their individual likenesses: but they had also a general character, which belonged to their age,—a prevading resemblance, in which their own peculiar distinctions were merged and lost. They were true English writers, unlatinised. They were not translators of French idioms, nor borrowers (without acknowledgment) of Roman thoughts. Their minds were not of exotic growth, nor their labours fashioned after a foreign model. Yet they were indebted to story and fable, to science and art—and they had a tincture of learning; but it was mixed with the bloom of fresh inspiration, and subdued to the purposes of original poetry. It was not the staple, the commodity upon which these writers traded; but was blended, gracefully and usefully, with their own homebred diction and original thought.

During the protectorate of Cromwell, the drama lay in a state of torpidity. Whatever intellect the time possessed was exhausted in tirades and discussions, religious and political, where cunning, and violence, and narrow bigotry alternately predominated. The gloom of an ignorant fanaticism lay heavy on the state, and oppressed it; and humour and fancy were put to flight, or sought shelter with the wandering cavaliers of the period. The spirit of the people was bent to arms. They fought for liberty or the crowned cause, as interest or opinion swayed them, while literature suffered in the contest. Milton, the greatest name of that age, was the grandest of the poets, but he had strictly no dramatic faculty. He himself speaks

throughout the whole of "Samson Agonistes,"—throughout all "Paradise Lost,"—all "Comus." His own great spirit shone through the story, whatever it might be; and whatever the character, his own arguments and his own opinions were brought out and arranged in lucid order. His talent was essentially epic, not dramatic; and it was because the former prevailed, and not the latter, that we are indebted for the greatest poem that the world has ever seen.

After the restoration of the second Charles, the Drama raised its head, but evidently with little of its former character. It had lost its old inspiration, caught directly from the bright smile of Nature. It had none of that fine audacity which prompted the utterance of so many truths; none of that proud imagination which carried the poet's thoughts to so high a station. But it drew in a noisy, and meagre, and monotonous stream of verse, through artificial conduit and French strainers, which fevered and fretted for a time, but, in the end, impoverished and reduced the strength and stature of the English Drama.

Dryden is the principal name of this period; and he was foremost to overturn the system of his forefathers, and substitute the French style in its stead. He vaunts, if we remember rightly, in one of his prefaces, of adding new words to our native tongue; and he certainly injured (as well as served) the cause of literature, by sanctioning by his example the prevalent taste of his time. The Restoration, perhaps, cherished and brought to life that bright phalanx of wits, Wycherly, and Congreve, and the rest; but it threw our graver dramatists into the shade. Comedy flourished, but Tragedy died; or, rather, it grew diseased, and bloated, and unnatural, and lost its strength and healthier look. It grew unwieldy, imitative, foreign. The French had studied and copied the Greek drama; and the English studied and copied the French. All fashions came at that time from Paris, and literature was not an exception. Corneille first, and afterwards Racine, who was contemporary with Dryden, lent their help to put our native dramatists out of the play. In fact, our playwrights found it much easier to imitate the French authors successfully, than to rival their predecessors in England. To this, as well as to the force of fashion, which undoubtedly operated very strongly, may be ascribed the change in our dramatic literature. The declamatory plays of Dryden and the others do not contain a tithe of the original thought that was lavished upon many of the second-rate dramas of the Elizabethan age. The tone of tragedy itself became cold and bombastic, where it was once full of life and simplicity, and the sentiments degenerated with the style. They were heavy and commonplace, or else were pilfered from the elder writers without acknowledgment, and dressed up in gaudy and fantastic habits, to suit the poor purposes of a play-mechanic. It is now well known that Rowe stole the entire plot and characters of his "Fair Penitent" from Massinger; but it is not so generally known that his production is contemptible in comparison with the original play.

Dryden was a striking and nervous writer. As a satirist, he has scarcely been equalled. As a dramatist, he had great command of language, and was full of high-sounding phrases; but these he showered indiscriminately upon all his characters, whatever their worth or occupation might be. The courtier, the tyrant, the victim, the slave, the cynic, were equally well provided with gorgeous words, and lavished them away alike upon all occasions. Dryden seems to have had a quick insight into one quarter of men's minds, and drew out their foibles and darker traits with the hand of

a master; but he could not portray a whole character. the good and the ill, and those proper shades of the intellect, those turns and touches of passion, which have made Shakspeare immortal. On the contrary, he had an obliquity of understanding which led him to the discovery of error only. His intellectual *retina* seems to have been too small to receive the whole compass and sketch of man. If he praised, he praised in general, with little discrimination; and his writings have none of the nicer touches of affection or goodness. But, with the lash in his hand, and a knave or a fool to deal with, he was an exemplary person. No culprit could stand against him:

Of all the dramatic writers since the return of Charles, *Lee* may be considered as the first. It is true, that Otway has constructed the *best* drama, and the stage is most indebted to him; but Lee had assuredly more imagination and passion than his rival, although every play which he has written is disgraced by the most unaccountable fustian. There is great tenderness and beauty in 'Theodosius;' and great power, mixed with extravagance, both in "The Rival Queens" and the "Massacre of Paris," and others. This last-mentioned play, which is not, we apprehend, very generally known, shows a skill in character equal to Otway, to whom Lee is commonly decidedly inferior in that respect. As a specimen of the spirit of Lee's dialogue, the reader may take the following from the "Massacre of Paris." The Duke of Guise and the Cardinal of Lorrain are speaking of Marguerite (de Valois), who has just left them in a transport of passion.

"*Car.* What have you done, my lord, to make her thus?
Guise. Causes are endless for a woman's loving.
Perhaps she has seen me break a lance on horseback;
Or, as my custom is, all over arm'd
Plunge in the Seine or Loire; and, where 'tis swiftest,
Plow to my point against the headlong stream.
'Tis certain, were my soul of that soft make
Which some believe, she has charms, my heavenly uncle," &c.

which he proceeds to discuss in a way to call down the rebuke of the Cardinal upon his amour,

"Not for the sin; that 's as the conscience makes it,"

as his Eminence says, but for the "love." To this Guise replies:—

"*Guise* I love, 'tis true, but most for my ambition:
Therefore I thought to marry Marguerite.
But, oh! that Cassiopeia in the Chair.
The regent-mother, and that dog *Anjou*,
Cross constellations! blast my plots ere born.
The king, too, frowns upon me; for, last night,
Hearing a ball was promised by the queen,
I came to help the show; when, at the door,
The king, who stood himself the sentry, stopp'd me,
And asked me what I came for? I replied,
To serve his majesty: he, sharp and short,
Retorted thus—he did not need my service.
Car. 'Tis plain, you must resolve to quit her;
For I am charged to tell you, she's design'd
To be the wife of Henry of Navarre.
'Tis the main beam in all that mighty engine
Which now begins to move——
Guise. I have it, and methinks it looks like *D'Alva*
I see the very motion of his beard,
His opening nostrils, and his dropping lids;
I hear him croak, too, to the king and queen:
'In Biscay's bay,—at Bayonne
Fish for the great fish;—take no care for frogs;—
Cut off the poppy heads;—lay the winds fast,
And straight the waves (the people) will be still.'"

Otway, however, on the whole, seems to have shown in his great tragedy ("Venice Preserved") more *dramatic* power than Lee; for although there is a good deal of common-place in it, and more than enough of prose, that tragedy is certainly entitled to rank very high as a dramatic production. Otway's pretensions to mere poetry were very slight; and his lyrical pieces are entirely worthless. What he effected, he did by a strong contrast of character, by spirited dialogue, and by always keeping in view the main object of the play. He did not dally with his subject, nor waste his strength in figures and conceits, but went straight to the end, and kept expectation alive. It must be confessed, however, that Jaffier and Belvidera are sometimes sufficiently tedious: but Pierre is a bold and striking figure, who stands out, like a rock, from the sea of sorrow which is poured around him. He is in fact the hero of the play, and, like a pleasant discord in music, saves it from the monotony which would otherwise oppress it.

Southern is less tumid than Lee and Dryden, and altogether more free from blemish; but he is a weaker writer than either. His "Isabella" possesses great pathos, and his dialogue is for the most part natural; but he has little else to boast of. ***Congreve*** was a wit of the first water, and the most sparkling comic writer perhaps in the circle of letters; and yet he wrote the "Mourning Bride." We think that, with his wit, he could not have been insensible to its defects. Of ***Rowe***, ***Hughes***, ***Hill***, ***Howard***, ***Murphy***, ***Thomson***, ***Cumberland***, etc. what can we say, but that they all wrote tragedies, which succeeded—we believe? ***Addison***'s "Cato" is as cold as a statue, and correct enough to satisfy the most fastidious of critics. We ourselves prefer his Sir Roger de Coverley: but these things are matters of taste. With regard to ***Dr. Johnson***'s "Irene," we must say that it would reflect little or no credit upon any writer whatever; and that it detracts from, rather than adds to, ***his*** deservedly great reputation, is, we apprehend, universally allowed. The author, we believe, once adventured an opinion, that nothing which had deserved to live was forgotten. We wonder whether, if he were alive, he would (in the present state of his play) retain his old way of thinking. These general maxims are dreadfully perilous to poets' reputations, and should not be proclaimed but with due deliberation.

Moore and ***Lillo*** were writers of ***domestic*** tragedy, and, with the exception perhaps of Heyward and Rowley, and we may add Southern, bear little resemblance to any of their predecessors. Theirs was a muse born without wings, but nursed amidst sin and misfortune, and fed with tears. They neither attempted to soar, nor to penetrate below the surface; but contented themselves with common calamities, every-day sorrows. Their plays are, like the Newgate Calendar, or a coroner's inquisition, true, but unpleasant. They give us an account of Mr. Beverley, who poisoned himself but the other day, after his losses at hazard or rouge et noir; or they admit us into the condemned cell of a city apprentice who has robbed his master. Their characters have all a London look; they frequent the city clubs, and breathe the air of traffic. These writers are as good as a newspaper—and no better. But Tragedy was surely meant for other and higher things than to bring the gallows (even with its moral) upon the stage, or to reduce to dialogue the coroner's inquisition or police reports. As in a picture, it is not always the closest imitator of nature who is the best painter; for an artist may make

an unexceptionable map of the human face, and set down the features and furrows truly, and yet be unable to produce a grand work:—so is the minute detail of facts, however melancholy, insufficient in itself for the purposes of good tragedy. The Muse's object is not to shock and terrify, or to show what may be better seen at the scaffold or in the hospital; but it is to please as well as move us, to elevate as well as to instruct.

MILTON. (No. 1.)

Disquisition on his Poetry.*

It is by his poetry that Milton is best known; and it is of his poetry that we wish to speak. By the general suffrage of the civilised world, his place has been assigned among the greatest masters of the art. His detractors, however, though outvoted, have not been silenced. There are many critics, and some of great name, who contrive in the same breath to extol the poems and to decry the poet. The works, they acknowledge, considered in themselves, may be classed among the noblest productions of the human mind; but they will not allow the author to rank with those great men who, born in the infancy of civilisation, supplied, by their own powers, the want of instruction: and, though destitute of models themselves, bequeathed to posterity models which defy imitation. Milton, it is said, inherited what his predecessors created; he lived in an enlightened age; he received a finished education; and we must therefore, if we would form a just estimate of his powers, make large deductions for these advantages.

We venture to say, on the contrary, paradoxical as the remark may appear, that no poet has ever had to struggle with more unfavourable circumstances than Milton. He doubted, as he has himself owned, whether he had not been born "an age too late." For this notion Johnson has thought fit to make him the butt of his clumsy ridicule. The poet, we believe, understood the nature of his art better than the critic. He knew that his poetical genius derived no advantage from the civilisation which surrounded him, or from the learning which he had acquired; and he looked back with something like regret to the ruder age of simple words and vivid impressions.

We think that, as civilisation advances, poetry almost necessarily declines. Therefore, though we admire those great works of imagination which have appeared in dark ages, we do not admire them the more because they have appeared in dark ages. On the contrary, we hold that the most wonderful and splendid proof of genius is a great poem produced in a civilised age. We cannot understand why those who believe in that most orthodox article of literary faith, that the earliest poets are generally the best, should wonder at the rule as if it were the exception. Surely the uniformity of the phenomenon indicates a corresponding uniformity in the cause.

* Milton's Treatise on Christian Doctrine, compiled from the Holy Scriptures alone.—*Vol. xlii. p. 305. August, 1825.*

fact is, that common observers reason from the progress of the ex-
ıtal sciences to that of the imitative arts. The improvement of the
is gradual and slow. Ages are spent in collecting materials, ages
ı separating and combining them. Even when a system has been
, there is still something to add, to alter, or to reject. Every genera-
joys the use of a vast hoard bequeathed to it by antiquity ; and trans-
augmented by fresh acquisitions, to future ages. In these pursuits,
re, the first speculators lie under great disadvantages, and even when
l, are entitled to praise. Their pupils, with far inferior intellectual
, speedily surpass them in actual attainments. Every girl who has
rs. Marcet's little Dialogues on Political Economy could teach Mon-
r Walpole many lessons in finance. Any intelligent man may now,
)lutely applying himself for a few years to mathematics, learn more
ıe great Newton knew after half a century of study and meditation.
it is not thus with music, with painting, or with sculpture. Still
t thus with poetry. The progress of refinement rarely supplies these
th better objects of imagination. It may indeed improve the instru-
which are necessary to the mechanical operations of the musician,
dptor, and the painter. But language, the machine of the poet, is
ted for his purpose in its rudest state. Nations, like individuals, first
e and then abstract. They advance from particular images to ge-
ərms. Hence the vocabulary of an enlightened society is philosophi-
at of a half civilised people is poetical.
change in the language of men is partly the cause and partly the
)f a corresponding change in the nature of their intellectual opera-
—a change by which science gains and poetry loses. Generalisation
ssary to the advancement of knowledge, but particularly in the crea-
f the imagination. In proportion as men know more and think more,
)ok less at individuals, and more at classes. They therefore make
theories and worse poems. They give us vague phrases instead of
, and personified qualities instead of men. They may be better able
lyse human nature than their predecessors. But analysis is not the
ss of the poet. His office is to portray, not to dissect. He may be-
n a moral sense, like Shaftesbury ; he may refer all human actions to
ıterest, like Helvetius ; or he may never think about the matter at all.
'eed on such subjects will not more influence his poetry, properly so
, than the notions which a painter may have conceived respecting the
'mal glands, or the circulation of the blood, will affect the tears of his
, or the blushes of his Aurora. If Shakspeare had written a book on
otives of human actions, it is by no means certain that it would have
ı good one. It is extremely improbable that it would have contained
) much able reasoning on the subject as is to be found in the "Fable
Bees." But could Mandeville have created an Iago? Well as he
how to resolve characters into their elements, would he have been
) combine those elements in such a manner as to make up a man,—a
living, individual man?
rhaps no person can be a poet, or can even enjoy poetry, without a
n unsoundness of mind, if any thing which gives so much pleasure
: to be called unsoundness. By poetry we mean, not of course all
ıg in verse, nor even all good writing in verse. Our definition ex-
s many metrical compositions which, on other grounds, deserve the
st praise. By poetry we mean, the art of employing words in such

a manner as to produce an illusion on the imagination,—the art of doing by means of words what the painter does by means of colours. Thus the greatest of poets has described it, in lines universally admired for the vigour and felicity of their diction, and still more valuable on account of the just notion which they convey of the art in which he excelled:—

> "As imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation, and a name."

These are the fruits of the "fine frenzy" which he ascribes to the poet,—a fine frenzy, doubtless, but still a frenzy. Truth, indeed, is essential to poetry; but it is the truth of madness. The reasonings are just, but the premises are false. After the first suppositions have been made, every thing ought to be consistent; but these first suppositions require a degree of credulity which almost amounts to a partial and temporary derangement of the intellect. Hence of all people children are the most imaginative. They abandon themselves without reserve to every illusion. Every image which is strongly presented to their mental eye produces on them the effect of reality. No man, whatever his sensibility may be, is ever affected by Hamlet or Lear, as a little girl is affected by the story of poor Red Riding-hood. She knows that it is all false, that wolves cannot speak, that there are no wolves in England. Yet in spite of her knowledge she believes; she weeps, she trembles; she dares not go into a dark room, lest she should feel the teeth of the monster at her throat. Such is the despotism of the imagination over uncultivated minds.

In a rude state of society, men are children with a greater variety of ideas. It is therefore in such a state of society that we may expect to find the poetical temperament in its highest perfection. In an enlightened age, there will be much intelligence, much science, much philosophy, abundance of just classification and subtle analysis, abundance of wit and eloquence, abundance of verses, and even of good ones,—but little poetry. Men will judge and compare; but they will not create. They will talk about the old poets, and comment on them, and to a certain degree enjoy them. But they will scarcely be able to conceive the effect which poetry produced on their ruder ancestors,—the agony, the ecstasy, the plenitude of belief. The Greek Rhapsodists, according to Plato, could not recite Homer without almost falling into convulsions.* The Mohawk hardly feels the scalping-knife while he shouts his death-song. The power which the ancient bards of Wales and Germany exercised over their auditors seems to modern readers almost miraculous. Such feelings are very rare in a civilised community, and most rare among those who participate most in its improvements. They linger longest among the peasantry.

Poetry produces an illusion on the eye of the mind, as a magic lantern produces an illusion on the eye of the body. And as the magic lantern acts best in a dark room, poetry effects its purpose most completely in a dark age. As the light of knowledge breaks in upon its exhibitions,—as the outlines of certainty become more and more definite, and the shades of probability more and more distinct, the hues and lineaments of the phantoms which it calls up grow fainter and fainter. We cannot unite the

* See the Dialogue between Socrates and Io.

incompatible advantages of reality and deception, the clear discernment of truth and the exquisite enjoyment of fiction.

He who, in an enlightened and literary society, aspires to be a great poet, must first become a little child. He must take to pieces the whole web of his mind. He must unlearn much of that knowledge which has perhaps constituted hitherto his chief title to superiority. His very talents will be a hinderance to him. His difficulties will be proportioned to his proficiency in the pursuits which are fashionable among his contemporaries; and that proficiency will in general be proportioned to the vigour and activity of his mind. And it is well if, after all his sacrifices and exertions, his works do not resemble a lisping man, or a modern ruin. We have seen in our own time great talents, intense labour, and long meditation, employed in this struggle against the spirit of the age; and employed, we will not say absolutely in vain, but with dubious success and feeble applause.

If these reasonings be just, no poet has ever triumphed over greater difficulties than Milton. He received a learned education. He was a profound and elegant classical scholar: he had studied all the mysteries of Rabbinical literature: he was intimately acquainted with every language of modern Europe from which either pleasure or information was then to be derived. He was perhaps the only great poet of latter times who has been distinguished by the excellence of his Latin verse. The genius of Petrarch was scarcely of the first order; and his poems in the ancient language, though much praised by those who have never read them, are wretched compositions. Cowley, with all his admirable wit and ingenuity, had little imagination: nor indeed do we think his classical diction comparable to that of Milton. The authority of Johnson is against us on this point. But Johnson had studied the bad writers of the middle ages till he had become utterly insensible to the Augustan elegance, and was as ill qualified to judge between two Latin styles as an habitual drunkard to set up for a wine-taster.

Versification in a dead language is an exotic, a far-fetched, costly, sickly imitation of that which elsewhere may be found in healthful and spontaneous perfection. The soils on which this rarity flourishes are in general as ill suited to the production of vigorous native poetry as the flower-pots of a hot-house to the growth of oaks. That the author of the Paradise Lost should have written the Epistle to Manso was truly wonderful. Never before were such marked originality and such exquisite mimicry found together. Indeed, in all the Latin poems of Milton the artificial manner indispensable to such works is admirably preserved: while, at the same time, the richness of his fancy and the elevation of his sentiments give to them a peculiar charm, an air of nobleness and freedom, which distinguishes them from all other writings of the same class. They remind us of the amusements of those angelic warriors who composed the cohort of Gabriel:

> "About him exercise heroic games
> The unarmed youth of heaven. But o'er their heads
> Celestial armoury, shield, helm, and spear,
> Hung bright, with diamond flaming and with gold."

We cannot look upon the sportive exercises for which the genius of Milton ungirds itself, without catching a glimpse of the gorgeous and terrible panoply which it is accustomed to wear. The strength of his imagination

triumphed over every obstacle. So intense and ardent was the fire of his mind, that it not only was not suffocated beneath the weight of its fuel, but penetrated the whole superincumbent mass with its own heat and radiance.

It is not our intention to attempt any thing like a complete examination of the poetry of Milton. The public has long been agreed as to the merit of the most remarkable passages, the incomparable harmony of the numbers, and the excellence of that style which no rival has been able to equal, and no parodist to degrade; which displays in their highest perfection the idiomatic powers of the English tongue, and to which every ancient and every modern language has contributed something of grace, of energy, or of music. In the vast field of criticism on which we are entering, innumerable reapers have already put their sickles. Yet the harvest is so abundant that the negligent search of a straggling gleaner may be rewarded with a sheaf.

The most striking characteristic of the poetry of Milton is the extreme remoteness of the associations by means of which it acts on the reader. Its effect is produced, not so much by what it expresses, as by what it suggests; not so much by the ideas which it directly conveys, as by other ideas which are connected with them. He electrifies the mind through conductors. The most unimaginative man must understand the Iliad. Homer gives him no choice, and requires from him no exertion; but takes the whole upon himself, and sets his images in so clear a light that it is impossible to be blind to them. The works of Milton cannot be comprehended or enjoyed, unless the mind of the reader co-operate with that of the writer. He does not paint a finished picture, or play for a mere passive listener. He sketches, and leaves others to fill up the outline. He strikes the key-note, and expects his hearer to make out the melody.

We often hear of the magical influence of poetry. The expression in general means nothing; but, applied to the writings of Milton, it is most appropriate. His poetry acts like an incantation. Its merit lies less in its obvious meaning than in its occult power. There would seem, at first sight, to be no more in his words than in other words. But they are words of enchantment. No sooner are they pronounced, than the past is present, and the distant near. New forms of beauty start at once into existence, and all the burial-places of the memory give up their dead. Change the structure of the sentence: substitute one synonyme for another, and the whole effect is destroyed. The spell loses its power; and he who should then hope to conjure with it, would find himself as much mistaken as Cassim in the Arabian tale, when he stood crying "Open Wheat," "Open Barley," to the door which obeyed no sound but "Open Sesame!" The miserable failure of Dryden in his attempt to rewrite some parts of the Paradise Lost is a remarkable instance of this.

In support of these observations, we may remark, that scarcely any passages in the poems of Milton are more generally known, or more frequently repeated, than those which are little more than muster-rolls of names. They are not always more appropriate or more melodious than other names; but they are charmed names. Every one of them is the first link in a long chain of associated ideas. Like the dwelling-place of our infancy revisited in manhood, like the song of our country heard in a strange land, they produce upon us an effect wholly independent of their intrinsic value. One transports us back to a remote period of history.

Another places us among the moral scenery and manners of a distant country. A third evokes all the dear classical recollections of childhood, the school-room, the dog-eared Virgil, the holiday, and the prize. A fourth brings before us the splendid phantoms of chivalrous romance, the trophied lists, the embroidered housings, the quaint devices, the haunted forests, the enchanted gardens, the achievements of enamoured knights, and the smiles of rescued princesses.

In none of the works of Milton is his peculiar manner more happily displayed than in the Allegro and the Penseroso. It is impossible to conceive that the mechanism of language can be brought to a more exquisite degree of perfection. These poems differ from others as ottar of roses differs from ordinary rose-water, the close packed essence from the thin diluted mixture. They are indeed not so much poems, as collections of hints from each of which the reader is to make out a poem for himself. Every epithet is a text for a Canto.

The Comus and the Samson Agonistes are works which, though of very different merit, offer some marked points of resemblance. They are both lyric poems in the form of plays. There are perhaps no two kinds of composition so essentially dissimilar as the drama and the ode. The business of the dramatist is to keep himself out of sight, and to let nothing appear but his characters. As soon as he attracts notice to his personal feelings, the illusion is broken. The effect is as unpleasant as that which is produced on the stage by the voice of a prompter, or the entrance of a scene-shifter. Hence it was that the tragedies of Byron were his least successful performances. They resemble those pasteboard pictures invented by the friend of children, Mr. Newberry, in which a single moveable head goes round twenty different bodies; so that the same face looks out upon us successively, from the uniform of a hussar, the furs of a judge, and the rags of a beggar. In all the characters, patriots and tyrants, haters and lovers, the frown and sneer of Harold were discernible in an instant. But this species of egotism, though fatal to the drama, is the inspiration of the ode. It is the part of the lyric poet to abandon himself, without reserve, to his own emotions.

Between these hostile elements many great men have endeavoured to effect an amalgamation; but never with complete success. The Greek Drama, on the model of which the Samson was written, sprung from the ode. The dialogue was engrafted on the chorus, and naturally partook of its character. The genius of the greatest of the Athenian dramatists co-operated with the circumstances under which tragedy made its first appearance. Æschylus was, head and heart, a lyric poet. In his time, the Greeks had far more intercourse with the East than in the days of Homer; and they had not yet acquired that immense superiority in war, in science, and in the arts, which, in the following generation, led them to treat the Asiatics with contempt. From the narrative of Herodotus it should seem, that they still looked up, with the veneration of disciples, to Egypt and Assyria. At this period, accordingly, it was natural that the literature of Greece should be tinctured with the Oriental style. And that style, we think, is clearly discernible in the works of Pindar and Æschylus. The latter often reminds us of the Hebrew writers. The book of Job, indeed, in conduct and diction, bears a considerable resemblance to some of his dramas. Considered as plays, his works are absurd: considered as choruses, they are above all praise. If, for instance, we examine the address of Clytemnestra to Agamemnon on his return, or the description of the seven Argive chiefs, by the

principles of dramatic writing, we shall instantly condemn them as monstrous. But, it we forget the characters, and think only of the poetry, we shall admit that it has never been surpassed in energy and magnificence. Sophocles made the Greek drama as dramatic as was consistent with its original form. His portraits of men have a sort of similarity; but it is the similarity not of a painting, but of a bas-relief. It suggests a resemblance; but it does not produce an illusion. Euripides attempted to carry the reform farther. But it was a task far beyond his powers, perhaps beyond any powers. Instead of correcting what was bad, he destroyed what was excellent. He substituted crutches for stilts, bad sermons for good odes.

Milton, it is well known, admired Euripides highly; much more highly than, in our opinion, he deserved. Indeed, the caresses which this partiality leads him to bestow on "sad Electra's poet," sometimes remind us of the beautiful Queen of Fairyland kissing the long ears of Bottom. At all events, there can be no doubt that this veneration for the Athenian, whether just or not, was injurious to the Samson Agonistes. Had he taken Æschylus for his model, he would have given himself up to the lyric inspiration, and poured out profusely all the treasures of his mind, without bestowing a thought on those dramatic proprieties which the nature of the work rendered it impossible to preserve. In the attempt to reconcile things in their own nature inconsistent, he has failed, as every one else must have failed. We cannot identify ourselves with the characters, as in a good play. We cannot identify ourselves with the poet, as in a good ode. The conflicting ingredients, like an acid and an alkali mixed, neutralise each other. We are by no means insensible to the merits of this celebrated piece, to the severe dignity of the style, the graceful and pathetic solemnity of the opening speech, or the wild and barbaric melody which gives so striking an effect to the choral passages. But we think it, we confess, the least successful effort of the genius of Milton.

The Comus is framed on the model of the Italian Masque, as the Samson is framed on the model of the Greek Tragedy. It is certainly the noblest performance of the kind which exists in any language. It is as far superior to the Faithful Shepherdess, as the Faithful Shepherdess is to the Aminta, or the Aminta to the Pastor Fido. It was well for Milton that he had here no Euripides to mislead him. He understood and loved the literature of modern Italy. But he did not feel for it the same veneration which he entertained for the remains of Athenian and Roman poetry, consecrated by so many lofty and endearing recollections. The faults, moreover, of his Italian predecessors, were of a kind to which his mind had a deadly antipathy. He could stoop to a plain style, sometimes even to a bald style: but false brilliancy was his utter aversion. His muse had no objection to a russet attire: but she turned with disgust from the finery of Guarini, as tawdry and as paltry as the rags of a chimney-sweeper on May-day. Whatever ornaments *she* wears are of massive gold, not only dazzling to the sight, but capable of standing the severest test of the crucible.

Milton attended in the Comus to the distinction which he neglected in the Samson. He made it, what it ought to be, essentially lyrical, and dramatic only in semblance. He has not attempted a fruitless struggle against a defect inherent in the nature of that species of composition; and he has therefore succeeded, wherever success was not impossible. The speeches must be read as majestic soliloquies; and he who so reads them will be enraptured with their eloquence, their sublimity, and their music. The in-

ıs of the dialogue; however, impose a constraint upon the writer, ι the illusion of the reader. The finest passages are those which in form as well as in spirit. "I should much commend," says the Sir Henry Wotton, in a letter to Milton, "the tragical part, if the d not ravish me with a certain Dorique delicacy in your songs and ereunto, I must plainly confess to you, I have seen yet nothing n our language." The criticism was just. It is when Milton escapes shackles of the dialogue, when he is discharged from the labour g two incongruous styles, when he is at liberty to indulge his ptures without reserve, that he rises even above himself. Then, own Good Genius bursting from the earthly form and weeds of he stands forth in celestial freedom and beauty; he seems to cry y—

> "Now my task is smoothly done,
> I can fly, or I can run,"

he earth, to soar above the clouds, to bathe in the Elysian dew of the and to inhale the balmy smells of nard and cassia, which the musky the zephyr scatter through the cedared alleys of the Hesperides.* are several of the minor poems of Milton on which we would will- ke a few remarks. Still more willingly would we enter into a de- amination of that admirable poem, the Paradise Regained, which, enough, is scarcely ever mentioned except as an instance of the ; of that parental affection which men of letters bear towards the of their intellects. That Milton was mistaken in preferring this cellent as it is, to the Paradise Lost, we must readily admit. But ure that the superiority of the Paradise Lost to the Paradise Re- s not more decided than the superiority of the Paradise Regained poem which has since made its appearance. But our limits pre- rom discussing the point at length. We hasten on to that extra- production which the general suffrage of critics has placed in the lass of human compositions.

nly poem of modern times which can be compared with the Pa- ost is the Divine Comedy. The subject of Milton in some points d that of Dante; but he has treated it in a widely different manner. ıot, we think, better illustrate our opinion respecting our own great ın by contrasting him with the father of Tuscan literature.

oetry of Milton differs from that of Dante as the hieroglyphics of iffered from the picture writing of Mexico. The images which nploys speak for themselves:— they stand simply for what they ose of Milton have a signification which is often discernible only to ated. Their value depends less on what they directly represent,

* "There eternal summer dwells,
And west winds, with musky wing,
About the cedar'd alleys fling
Nard and cassia's balmy smells:
Iris there with humid bow
Waters the odorous banks, that blow
Flowers of more mingled hue
Than her purfled scarf can show,
And drenches with Elysian dew
(List, mortals, if your ears be true,)
Beds of hyacinths and roses,
Where young Adonis oft reposes,
Waxing well of his deep wound."

than on what they remotely suggest. However strange, however grotesque, may be the appearance which Dante undertakes to describe, he never shrinks from describing it. He gives us the shape, the colour, the sound, the smell, the taste; he counts the numbers; he measures the size. His similes are the illustrations of a traveller. Unlike those of other poets, and especially of Milton, they are introduced in a plain business-like manner, not for the sake of any beauty in the objects from which they are drawn, not for the sake of any ornament which they may impart to the poem, but simply in order to make the meaning of the writer as clear to the reader as it is to himself. The ruins of the precipice which led from the sixth to the seventh circle of hell were like those of the rock which fell into the Adige on the south of Trent. The cataract of Phlegethon was like that of Aqua Cheta at the monastery of St. Benedict. The place where the heretics were confined in burning tombs resembled the vast cemetery of Arles!

Now, let us compare with the exact details of Dante the dim intimations of Milton. We will cite a few examples. The English poet has never thought of taking the measure of Satan. He gives us merely a vague idea of vast bulk. In one passage the fiend lies stretched out huge in length, floating many a rood, equal in size to the earth-born enemies of Jove, or to the sea-monster which the mariner mistakes for an island. When he addresses himself to battle against the guardian angels, he stands like Teneriffe or Atlas; his stature reaches the sky. Contrast with these descriptions the lines in which Dante has described the gigantic spectre of Nimrod. "His face seemed to me as long and as broad as the ball of St. Peter's at Rome; and his other limbs were in proportion; so that the bank, which concealed him from the waist downwards, nevertheless showed so much of him, that three tall Germans would in vain have attempted to reach to his hair." We are sensible that we do no justice to the admirable style of the Florentine poet. But Mr. Cary's translation is not at hand; and our version, however rude, is sufficient to illustrate our meaning.

Once more, compare the lazar-house in the eleventh book of the Paradise Lost with the last ward of Malebolge in Dante. Milton avoids the loathsome details, and takes refuge in indistinct but solemn and tremendous imagery,—Despair hurrying from couch to couch, to mock the wretches with his attendance; Death shaking his dart over them, but, in spite of supplications, delaying to strike. What says Dante? "There was such a moan there, as there would be if all the sick who, between July and September, are in the Hospitals of Valdichiana, and of the Tuscan swamps, and of Sardinia, were in one pit together; and such a stench was issuing forth as is wont to issue from decayed limbs."

We will not take upon ourselves the invidious office of settling precedency between two such writers. Each in his own department is incomparable; and each, we may remark, has, wisely or fortunately, taken a subject adapted to exhibit his peculiar talent to the greatest advantage. The Divine Comedy is a personal narrative. Dante is the eye-witness and ear-witness of that which he relates. He is the very man who has heard the tormented spirits crying out for the second death, who has read the dusky characters on the portal within which there is no hope, who has hidden his face from the terrors of the Gorgon, who has fled from the hooks and the seething pitch of Barbariccia and Diaghignazzo. His own hands have grasped the shaggy sides of Lucifer. His own feet have climbed the mountain of expiation. His own brow has been marked by the purifying angel.

The reader would throw aside such a tale in incredulous disgust, unless it were told with the strongest air of veracity, with a sobriety even in its horrors, with the greatest precision and multiplicity in its details. The narrative of Milton in this respect differs from that of Dante, as the adventures of Amadis differ from those of Gulliver. The author of Amadis would have made his book ridiculous if he had introduced those minute particulars which give such a charm to the work of Swift—the nautical observations, the affected delicacy about names, the official documents transcribed at full length, and all the unmeaning gossip and scandal of the court, springing out of nothing, and tending to nothing. We are not shocked at being told that a man who lived, nobody knows when, saw many very strange sights, and we can easily abandon ourselves to the illusion of the romance. But when Lemuel Gulliver, surgeon, now actually resident at Rotherhithe, tells us of pygmies and giants, flying islands and philosophising horses, nothing but such circumstantial touches could produce for a single moment a deception on the imagination.

Of all the poets who have introduced into their works the agency of supernatural beings, Milton has succeeded best. Here Dante decidedly yields to him: and as this is a point on which many rash and ill-considered judgments have been pronounced, we feel inclined to dwell on it a little longer. The most fatal error which a poet can possibly commit in the management of his machinery, is that of attempting to philosophise too much. Milton has been often censured for ascribing to spirits many functions of which spirits must be incapable. But these objections, though sanctioned by eminent names, originate, we venture to say, in profound ignorance of the art of poetry.

What is spirit? What are our own minds, the portion of spirit with which we are best acquainted? We observe certain phenomena. We cannot explain them into material causes. We therefore infer that there exists something which is not material. But of this something we have no idea. We can define it only by negatives. We can reason about it only by symbols. We use the word; but we have no image of the thing: and the business of poetry is with images, and not with words. The poet uses words, indeed; but they are merely the instruments of his art, not its objects. They are the materials which he is to dispose in such a manner as to present a picture to the mental eye. And, if they are not so disposed, they are no more entitled to be called poetry than a bale of canvas and a box of colours to be called a painting.

Logicians may reason about abstractions. But the great mass of mankind can never feel an interest in them. They must have images. The strong tendency of the multitude in all ages and nations to idolatry can be explained on no other principle. The first inhabitants of Greece, there is every reason to believe, worshipped one invisible Deity. But the necessity of having something more definite to adore, produced, in a few centuries, the innumerable crowd of gods and goddesses. In like manner the ancient Persians thought it impious to exhibit the Creator under a human form. Yet even these transferred to the sun the worship which, speculatively, they considered due only to the Supreme Mind. The history of the Jews is the record of a continued struggle between pure Theism, supported by the most terrible sanctions, and the strangely fascinating desire of having some visible and tangible object of adoration. Perhaps none of the secondary causes which Gibbon has assigned for the rapidity with which Christianity spread over the

world, while Judaism scarcely ever acquired a proselyte, operated more powerfully than this feeling. God the uncreated, the incomprehensible, the invisible, attracted few worshippers. A philosopher might admire so noble a conception: but the crowd turned away in disgust from words which presented no image to their minds. It was before Deity embodied in a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the Synagogue, and the doubts of the Academy, and the pride of the Portico, and the fasces of the Lictor, and the swords of thirty legions, were humbled in the dust! Soon after Christianity had achieved its triumph, the principle which had assisted it began to corrupt it. It became a new Paganism. Patron saints assumed the offices of household gods. St. George took the place of Mars; St. Elmo consoled the mariner for the loss of Castor and Pollux; the Virgin Mother and Cecilia succeeded to Venus and the Muses. The fascination of sex and loveliness was again joined to that of celestial dignity; and the homage of chivalry was blended with that of religion. Reformers have often made a stand against these feelings; but never with more than apparent and partial success. The men who demolished the images in cathedrals have not always been able to demolish those which were enshrined in their minds. It would not be difficult to show, that in politics the same rule holds good. Doctrines, we are afraid, must generally be *embodied* before they can excite a strong public feeling. The multitude is more easily interested for the most unmeaning badge, or the most insignificant name, than for the most important principle.

From these considerations we infer, that no poet, who should affect that metaphysical accuracy for the want of which Milton has been blamed, would escape a disgraceful failure. Still, however, there was another extreme, which, though far less dangerous, was also to be avoided. The imaginations of men are in a great measure under the control of their opinions. The most exquisite art of poetical colouring can produce no illusion, when it is employed to represent that which is at once perceived to be incongruous and absurd. Milton wrote in an age of philosophers and theologians. It was necessary therefore for him to abstain from giving such a shock to their understandings as might break the charm which it was his object to throw over their imaginations. This is the real explanation of the indistinctness and inconsistency with which he has often been reproached. Dr. Johnson acknowledges that it was absolutely necessary for him to clothe his spirits with material forms. "But," says he, "he should have secured the consistency of his system by keeping immateriality out of sight, and seducing the reader to drop it from his thoughts." This is easily said; but what if he could not seduce the reader to drop it from *his* thoughts? What if the contrary opinion had taken so full a possession of the minds of men as to leave no room even for the *quasi-belief* which poetry requires? Such we suspect to have been the case. It was impossible for the poet to adopt altogether the material or the immaterial system. He therefore took his stand on the debateable ground. He left the whole in ambiguity. He has doubtless, by so doing, laid himself open to the charge of inconsistency. But, though philosophically in the wrong, we cannot but believe that he was poetically in the right. This task, which almost any other writer would have found impracticable, was easy to him. The peculiar art which he possessed of communicating his meaning circuitously, through

a long succession of associated ideas, and of intimating more than he expressed, enabled him to disguise those incongruities which he could not avoid.

Poetry which relates to the beings of another world, ought to be at once mysterious and picturesque. That of Milton is so. That of Dante is picturesque, indeed, beyond any that was ever written. Its effect approaches to that produced by the pencil or the chisel. But it is picturesque to the exclusion of all mystery. This is a fault indeed on the right side,—a fault inseparable from the plan of his poem, which, as we have already observed, rendered the utmost accuracy of description necessary. Still it is a fault. His supernatural agents excite an interest; but it is not the interest which is proper to supernatural agents. We feel that we could talk with his ghosts and demons, without any emotion of unearthly awe. We could, like Don Juan, ask them to supper, and eat heartily in their company. His angels are good men with wings. His devils are spiteful ugly executioners. His dead men are merely living men in strange situations. The scene which passes between the poet and Facinata is justly celebrated. Still Facinata in the burning tomb is exactly what Facinata would have been at an *auto da fe*. Nothing can be more touching than the first interview of Dante and Beatrice. Yet what is it but a lovely woman chiding, with sweet austere composure, the lover for whose affection she is grateful, but whose vices she reprobates? The feelings which give the passage its charm would suit the streets of Florence as well as the summit of the Mount of Purgatory.

The Spirits of Milton are unlike those of almost all other writers. His Fiends, in particular, are wonderful creations. They are not metaphysical abstractions. They are not wicked men. They are not ugly beasts. They have no horns, no tails, none of the fee–faw–fum of Tasso and Klopstock. They have just enough in common with human nature to be intelligible to human beings. Their characters are, like their forms, marked by a certain dim resemblance to those of men, but exaggerated to gigantic dimensions, and veiled in mysterious gloom.

Perhaps the gods and demons of Æschylus may best bear a comparison with the angels and devils of Milton. The style of the Athenian had, as we have remarked, something of the vagueness and tenor of the Oriental character; and the same peculiarity may be traced in his mythology. It has nothing of the amenity and elegance which we generally find in the superstitions of Greece. All is rugged, barbaric, and colossal. His legends seem to harmonise less with the fragrant groves and graceful porticoes in which his countrymen paid their vows to the God of Light and Goddess of Desire, than with those huge and grotesque labyrinths of eternal granite, in which Egypt enshrined her mystic Osiris, or in which Hindostan still bows down to her seven–headed idols. His favourite gods are those of the elder generations—the sons of heaven and earth, compared with whom Jupiter himself was a stripling and an upstart,—the gigantic Titans and the inexorable Furies. Foremost among his creations of this class stands Prometheus, half fiend half redeemer, the friend of man, the sullen and implacable enemy of heaven. He bears undoubtedly a considerable resemblance to the Satan of Milton. In both we find the same impatience of control, the same ferocity, the same unconquerable pride. In both characters also are mingled, though in very different proportions, some kind and generous feelings. Prometheus, however, is hardly superhuman enough. He talks too much of his chains and his uneasy posture: he is rather too much

depressed and agitated. His resolution seems to depend on the knowledge which he possesses that he holds the fate of his torturer in his hands, and that the hour of his release will surely come. But Satan is a creature of another sphere. The might of his intellectual nature is victorious over the extremity of pain. Amidst agonies which cannot be conceived without horror, he deliberates, resolves, and even exults. Against the sword of Michael, against the thunder of Jehovah, against the flaming lake and the marl burning with solid fire, against the prospect of an eternity of unintermittent misery, his spirit bears up unbroken, resting on its own innate energies, requiring no support from any thing external, nor even from hope itself!

To return for a moment to the parallel which we have been attempting to draw between Milton and Dante, we would add, that the poetry of these great men has in a considerable degree taken its character from their moral qualities. They are not egotists. They rarely obtrude their idiosyncrasies on their readers. They have nothing in common with these modern beggars for fame, who extort a pittance from the compassion of the inexperienced, by exposing the nakedness and sores of their minds. Yet it would be difficult to name two writers whose works have been more completely, though undesignedly, coloured by their personal feelings.

The character of Milton was peculiarly distinguished by loftiness of thought; that of Dante by intensity of feeling. In every line of the Divine Comedy we discern the asperity which is produced by pride struggling with misery. There is perhaps no work in the world so deeply and uniformly sorrowful. The melancholy of Dante was no fantastic caprice. It was not, as far as at this distance of time can be judged, the effect of external circumstances. It was from within. Neither love nor glory, neither the conflicts of earth nor the hope of heaven, could dispel it. It twined every consolation and every pleasure into its own nature. It resembled that noxious Sardinian soil, of which the intense bitterness is said to have been perceptible even in its honey. His mind was, in the noble language of the Hebrew poet, "a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and where the light was as darkness!" The gloom of his character discolours all the passions of men and all the face of nature, and tinges with its own livid hue the flowers of Paradise and the glories of the Eternal Throne! All the portraits of him are singularly characteristic. No person can look on the features, noble even to ruggedness, the dark furrows of the cheek, the haggard and woful stare of the eye, the sullen and contemptuous curve of the lip, and doubt that they belonged to a man too proud and too sensitive to be happy.

Milton was, like Dante, a statesman and a lover—and, like Dante, he had been unfortunate in ambition and in love. He had survived his health and his sight, the comforts of his home, and the prosperity of his party. Of the great men by whom he had been distinguished at his entrance into life, some had been taken away from the evil to come; some had carried into foreign climates their unconquerable hatred of oppression; some were pining in dungeons; and some had poured forth their blood on scaffolds. That hateful proscription, facetiously termed the Act of Indemnity and Oblivion, had set a mark on the poor, blind, deserted poet, and held him up by name to the hatred of a profligate court and an inconstant people! Venal and licentious scribblers, with just sufficient talent to clothe the thoughts of a pander in the style of a bellman, were now the favourite writers of the *sovereign* and the public. It was a loathsome herd, which could be com-

ared to nothing so fitly as to the rabble of Comus,—grotesque monsters, alf bestial, half human, dropping with wine, bloated with gluttony, and eeling in obscene dances. Amidst these his Muse was placed, like the chaste ady of the Masque, lofty, spotless, and serene—to be chattered at, and ointed at, and grinned at, by the whole rabble of Satyrs and Goblins. If ver despondency and asperity could be excused in any man, it might have een excused in Milton. But the strength of his mind overcame every alamity. Neither blindness, nor gout, nor age, nor penury, nor domestic ffictions, nor political disappointments, nor abuse, nor proscription, nor neglect, had power to disturb his sedate and majestic patience. His spirits do not seem to have been high, but they were singularly equable. His temper was serious, perhaps stern; but it was a temper which no sufferings could render sullen or fretful. Such as it was when, on the eve of great events, he returned from his travels, in the prime of health and manly beauty, loaded with literary distinctions, and glowing with patriotic hopes, such it continued to be—when, after having experienced every calamity which is incident to our nature, old, poor, sightless and disgraced, he retired to his hovel to die!

Hence it was, that, though he wrote the Paradise Lost at a time of life when images of beauty and tenderness are in general beginning to fade, even from those minds in which they have not been effaced by anxiety and disappointment, he adorned it with all that is most lovely and delightful in the physical and in the moral world. Neither Theocritus nor Ariosto had a finer or a more healthful sense of the pleasantness of external objects, or loved better to luxuriate amidst sunbeams and flowers, the songs of nightingales, the juice of summer fruits, and the coolness of shady fountains. His conception of love unites all the voluptuousness of the Oriental harem, and all the gallantry of the chivalric tournament, with all the pure and quiet affection of an English fireside. His poetry reminds us of the miracles of Alpine scenery. Nooks and dells, beautiful as fairy land, are embosomed in its most rugged and gigantic elevations. The roses and myrtles bloom unchilled on the verge of the avalanche.

Traces, indeed, of the peculiar character of Milton may be found in all his works; but it is most strongly displayed in the Sonnets. Those remarkable poems have been undervalued by critics who have not understood their nature. They have no epigrammatic point. There is none of the ingenuity of Filicaja in the thought, none of the hard and brilliant enamel of Petrarch in the style. They are simple but majestic records of the feelings of the poet; as little tricked out for the public eye as his diary would have been. A victory, an expected attack upon the city, a momentary fit of depression or exultation, a jest thrown out against one of his books, a dream, which, for a short time restored to him that beautiful face over which the grave had closed for ever, led him to musings which, without effort, shaped themselves into verse. The unity of sentiment and severity of style which characterise these little pieces, remind us of the Greek Anthology, or perhaps still more of the Collects of the English Liturgy—the noble poem on the massacres of Piedmont is strictly a collect in verse.

The Sonnets are more or less striking, according as the occasions which gave birth to them are more or less interesting. But they are, almost without exception, dignified by a sobriety and greatness of mind to which we know not where to look for a parallel. It would indeed be scarcely safe to draw any decided inferences as to the character of a writer, from

passages directly egotistical. But the qualities which we have ascribed to Milton, though perhaps most strongly marked in those parts of his works which treat of his personal feelings, are distinguishable in every page, and impart to all his writings, prose and poetry, English, Latin, and Italian, a strong family likeness.

MILTON. (No. 2.)

His public Conduct.*

Milton's public conduct was such as was to be expected from a man of spirit so high, and an intellect so powerful. He lived at one of the most memorable eras in the history of mankind; at the very crisis of the great conflict between Oromasdes and Arimanes—liberty and despotism—reason and prejudice. That great battle was fought for no single generation, for no single land. The destinies of the human race were staked on the same cast with the freedom of the English people. Then were first proclaimed those mighty principles which have since worked their way into the depths of the American forests; which have roused Greece from the slavery and degradation of two thousand years; and which, from one end of Europe to the other, have kindled an unquenchable fire in the hearts of the oppressed, and loosed the knees of the oppressors with a strange and unwonted fear!

Of those principles, then struggling for their infant existence, Milton was the most devoted and eloquent literary champion. We need not say how much we admire his public conduct. But we cannot disguise from ourselves that a large portion of his countrymen still think it unjustifiable. The civil war, indeed, has been more discussed, and is less understood, than any event in English history. The Roundheads laboured under the disadvantage of which the lion in the fable complained so bitterly. Though they were the conquerors, their enemies were the painters. As a body, they had done their utmost to decry and ruin literature; and literature was even with them, as, in the long run, it always is with its enemies. The best book on their side of the question is the charming memoir of Mrs. Hutchinson. May's History of the Parliament is good; but it breaks off at the most interesting crisis of the struggle. The performance of Ludlow is very foolish and violent; and most of the later writers, who have espoused the same cause, Oldmixon for instance, and Catherine Macaulay, have, to say the least, been more distinguished by zeal than either by candour or by skill. On the other side are the most authoritative and the most popular historical works in our language, that of Clarendon, and that of Hume. The former is not only ably written, and full of valuable information, but has also an air of dignity and sincerity, which makes even the prejudices and errors with which it abounds respectable. Hume, from whose fascinating narrative the great mass of the reading public are still contented to take their opinions, hated religion so much, that he hated liberty for having been allied with religion—and has pleaded the cause of tyranny with the dexterity of an advocate, while affecting the impartiality of a judge.

* *Milton's* Treatise on Christian Doctrine, compiled from the Holy Scriptures alone.—Vol. xli. *p. 324. August, 1825.*

The public conduct of Milton must be approved or condemned, according as the resistance of the people to Charles I. shall appear to be justifiable or criminal. We shall therefore make no apology for dedicating a few pages to the discussion of that interesting and most important question. We shall not argue it on general grounds; we shall not recur to those primary principles from which the claim of any government to the obedience of its subjects is to be deduced; it is a vantage-ground to which we are entitled; but we will relinquish it. We are, on this point, so confident of superiority, that we have no objection to imitate the ostentatious generosity of those ancient knights, who vowed to joust without helmet or shield against all enemies, and to give their antagonists the advantage of sun and wind. We will take the naked constitutional question. We confidently affirm, that every reason which can be urged in favour of the revolution of 1688, may be urged with at least equal force in favour of what is called the Great Rebellion.

In one respect only, we think, can the warmest admirers of Charles venture to say that he was a better sovereign than his son. He was not, in name and profession, a Papist; we say in name and profession,—because both Charles himself, and his miserable creature Laud, while they abjured the innocent badges of Popery, retained all its worst vices, a complete subjection of reason to authority, a weak preference of form to substance, a childish passion for mummeries, an idolatrous veneration for the priestly character, and, above all, a stupid and ferocious intolerance. This, however, we wave. We will concede that Charles was a good Protestant; but we say that this Protestantism does not make the slightest distinction between his case and that of James.

The principles of the Revolution have often been grossly misrepresented, and never more than in the course of the present year. There is a certain class of men, who, while they profess to hold in reverence the great names and great actions of former times, never look at them for any other purpose than in order to find in them some excuse for existing abuses. In every venerable precedent, they pass by what is essential, and take only what is accidental: they keep out of sight what is beneficial, and hold up to public imitation all that is defective. If, in any part of any great example, there be any thing unsound, these flesh-flies detect it with an unerring instinct, and dart upon it with a ravenous delight. They cannot always prevent the advocates of a good measure from compassing their end; but they feel, with their prototype, that

> " Their labours must be to pervert that end,
> And out of good still to find means of evil."

To the blessings which England has derived from the Revolution, these people are utterly insensible. The expulsion of a tyrant, the solemn recognition of popular rights, liberty, security, toleration, all go for nothing with them. One sect there was, which, from unfortunate temporary causes, it was thought necessary to keep under close restraint. One part of the empire there was, so unhappily circumstanced, that at that time its misery was necessary to our happiness, and its slavery to our freedom! These are the parts of the Revolution which the politicians of whom we speak love to contemplate, and which seem to them, not indeed to vindicate, but in some degree to palliate, the good which it has produced. Talk to them of Naples, of Spain, or of South America! they stand forth, zealots for the

doctrine of Divine Right—which has now come back to us, like a thief from transportation, under the *alias* of Legitimacy. But mention the miseries of Ireland! Then William is a hero. Then Somers and Shrewsbury are great men. Then the Revolution is a glorious era! The very same persons, who, in this country, never omit an opportunity of reviving every wretched Jacobite slander respecting the Whigs of that period, have no sooner crossed St. George's Channel, than they begin to fill their bumpers to the glorious and immortal memory. They may truly boast that they look not at men but at measures. So that evil be done, they care not who does it—the arbitrary Charles or the liberal William, Ferdinand the Catholic, or Frederick the Protestant! On such occasions their deadliest opponents may reckon upon their candid construction. The bold assertions of these people have of late impressed a large portion of the public with an opinion, that James II. was expelled simply because he was a Catholic, and that the Revolution was essentially a Protestant revolution.

But this certainly was *not* the case. Nor can any person who has acquired more knowledge of the history of those times than is to be found in Goldsmith's Abridgment, believe that, if James had held his own religious opinions without wishing to make proselytes, or if, wishing even to make proselytes, he had contented himself with exerting only his constitutional influence for that purpose, the Prince of Orange would ever have been invited over. Our ancestors, we suppose, knew their own meaning. And, if we may believe them, their hostility was *primarily* not to Popery, but to *Tyranny*. They did not drive out a tyrant because he was a Catholic; but they excluded Catholics from the crown, because they thought them likely to be tyrants. The ground on which they, in their famous resolution, declared the throne vacant, was this, "that James had broken the fundamental laws of the kingdom." Every man, therefore, who approves of the Revolution of 1688, must hold, that *the breach of fundamental laws on the part of the Sovereign* justifies resistance. The question then is this: Had Charles I. broken the fundamental laws of England?

No person can answer in the negative, unless he refuses credit, not merely to all the accusations brought against Charles by his opponents, but to the narratives of the warmest Royalists, and to the confessions of the King himself. If there be any truth in *any* historian of *any* party who has related the events of that reign, the conduct of Charles, from his accession to the meeting of the Long Parliament had been a continued course of oppression and treachery. Let those who applaud the Revolution and condemn the Rebellion, mention one act of James II. to which a parallel is not to be found in the history of his father. Let them lay their fingers on a single article in the Declaration of Right, presented by the two houses to William and Mary, which Charles is not acknowledged to have violated. He had, according to the testimony of his own friends, usurped the functions of the legislature, raised taxes without the consent of parliament, and quartered troops on the people in the most illegal and vexatious manner. Not a single session of parliament had passed without some unconstitutional attack on the freedom of debate. The right of petition was grossly violated. Arbitrary judgments, exorbitant fines, and unwarranted imprisonments, were grievances of daily and hourly occurrence. If these things do not justify resistance, the Revolution was treason; if they do, the Great Rebellion was laudable.

But, it is said, why not adopt milder measures? Why, after the king

had consented to so many reforms, and renounced so many oppressive prerogatives, did the parliament continue to rise in their demands, at the risk of provoking a civil war? The ship-money had been given up. The star-chamber had been abolished. Provision had been made for the frequent convocation and secure deliberation of parliaments. Why not pursue an end confessedly good, by peaceable and regular means? We recur again to the analogy of the Revolution. Why was James driven from the throne? Why was he not retained upon conditions? He too had offered to call a free parliament, and to submit to its decision all the matters in dispute. Yet we praise our forefathers, who preferred a revolution, a disputed succession, a dynasty of strangers, twenty years of foreign and intestine war, a standing army, and a national debt, to the rule, however restricted, of a tried and proved tyrant. The Long Parliament acted on the same principle, and is entitled to the same praise. They could not trust the king. He had no doubt passed salutary laws. But what assurance had they that he would not break them? He had renounced oppressive prerogatives. But where was the security that he would not resume them? They had to deal with a man whom no tie could bind; a man who made and broke promises with equal facility; a man whose honour had been a hundred times pawned, and never redeemed.

Here, indeed, the Long Parliament stands on still stronger ground than the Convention of 1688. No action of James can be compared, for wickedness and impudence, to the conduct of Charles with respect to the Petition of Right. The Lords and Commons present him with a bill in which the constitutional limits of his power are marked out. He hesitates; he evades; at last he bargains to give his assent, for five subsidies. The bill receives his solemn assent. The subsidies are voted. But no sooner is the tyrant relieved, than he returns at once to all the arbitrary measures which he had bound himself to abandon, and violates all the clauses of the very act which he had been paid to pass.

For more than ten years the people had seen the rights, which were theirs by a double claim, by immemorial inheritance and by recent purchase, infringed by the perfidious king who had recognised them. At length circumstances compelled Charles to summon another parliament: another chance was given them for liberty. Were they to throw it away as they had thrown away the former? Were they again to be cozened by *le Roi le veut?* Were they again to advance their money on pledges which had been forfeited over and over again? Were they to lay a second Petition of Right at the foot of the throne, to grant another lavish aid in exchange for another unmeaning ceremony, and then to take their departure, till, after ten years more of fraud and oppression, their prince should again require a supply, and again repay it with a perjury? They were compelled to choose whether they would *trust* a tyrant or *conquer* him. We think that they chose wisely and nobly.

The advocates of Charles, like the advocates of other malefactors against whom overwhelming evidence is produced, generally decline all controversy about the facts, and content themselves with calling testimony to character. He had so many private virtues! And had James II. no private virtues? Was even Oliver Cromwell, his bitterest enemies themselves being judges, destitute of private virtues? And what, after all, are the virtues ascribed to Charles? A religious zeal, not more sincere than that of his son, and fully as weak and narrow-minded, and a few of the ordinary household

decencies which half the tombstones in England claim for those who lie beneath them. A good father! A good husband!—Ample apologies indeed for fifteen years of persecution, tyranny, and falsehood!

We charge him with having broken his coronation-oath—and we are told that he kept his marriage-vow? We accuse him of having given up his people to the merciless inflictions of the most hot-headed and hard-hearted of prelates—and the defence is, that he took his little son on his knee, and kissed him! We censure him for having violated the articles of the Petition of Right, after having, for good and valuable consideration, promised to observe them—and we are informed that he was accustomed to hear prayers at six o'clock in the morning! It is to such considerations as these, together with his Vandyke dress, his handsome face, and his peaked beard, that he owes, we verily believe, most of his popularity with the present generation.

For ourselves, we own that we do not understand the common phrase, a good man but a bad king. We can as easily conceive a good man and an unnatural father, or a good man and a treacherous friend. We cannot, in estimating the character of an individual, leave out of our consideration his conduct in the most important of all human relations. And if, in that relation, we find him to have been selfish, cruel, and deceitful, we shall take the liberty to call him a bad man, in spite of all his temperance at table, and all his regularity at chapel.

We cannot refrain from adding a few words respecting a topic on which the defenders of Charles are fond of dwelling. If, they say, he governed his people ill, he at least governed them after the example of his predecessors. If he violated their privileges, it was because those privileges had not been accurately defined. No act of oppression has ever been imputed to him, which has not a parallel in the annals of the Tudors. This point Hume has laboured, with an art which is as discreditable in a historical work as it would be admirable in a forensic address. The answer is short, clear, and decisive. Charles had assented to the Petition of Right. *He had renounced* the oppressive powers said to have been exercised by his predecessors, and he had renounced them for money. He was not entitled to set up his antiquated claims against his own recent release.

These arguments are so obvious, that it may seem superfluous to dwell upon them. But those who have observed how much the events of that time are misrepresented and misunderstood, will not blame us for stating the case simply. It is a case of which the simplest statement is the strongest.

The enemies of the parliament, indeed, rarely choose to take issue on the great points of the question. They content themselves with exposing some of the crimes and follies to which public commotions necessarily give birth. They bewail the unmerited fate of Strafford. They execrate the lawless violence of the army. They laugh at the Scriptural names of the preachers. Major-generals fleecing their districts; soldiers revelling on the spoils of a ruined peasantry; upstarts, enriched by the public plunder, taking possession of the hospitable firesides and hereditary trees of the old gentry; boys smashing the beautiful windows of cathedrals; Quakers riding naked through the market-place; fifth-monarchy-men shouting for King Jesus; agitators lecturing from the tops of tubs on the fate of Agag;—all these, they tell us, were the offspring of the Great Rebellion.

Be it so. We are not careful to answer in this matter. These charges,

were they infinitely more important, would not alter our opinion of an event which alone has made us to differ from the slaves who crouch beneath the sceptres of Brandenburgh and Braganza. Many evils, no doubt, *were* produced by the civil war. They were the price of our liberty. Has the acquisition been worth the sacrifice? It is the nature of the devil of tyranny to tear and rend the body which he leaves. Are the miseries of continued possession less horrible than the struggles of the tremendous exorcism?

If it were possible that a people brought up under an intolerant and arbitrary system could subvert that system without acts of cruelty and folly, half the objections to despotic power would be removed. We should, in that case, be compelled to acknowledge, that it at least produces no pernicious effects on the intellectual and moral character of a people. We deplore the outrages which accompany revolutions. But the more violent the outrages, the more assured we feel that *a revolution was necessary*. The violence of those outrages will always be proportioned to the ferocity and ignorance of the people: and the ferocity and ignorance of the people will be proportioned to the oppression and degradation under which they have been accustomed to live. Thus it was in our civil war. The rulers in the church and state reaped only that which they had sown. They had prohibited free discussion: they had done their best to keep the people unacquainted with their duties and their rights. The retribution was just and natural. If they suffered from popular ignorance, it was because they had themselves taken away the key of knowledge. If they were assailed with blind fury, it was because they had exacted an equally blind submission.

It is the character of such revolutions that we always see the worst of them at first. Till men have been for some time free, they know not how to use their freedom. The natives of wine countries are always sober. In climates where wine is a rarity, intemperance abounds. A newly liberated people may be compared to a northern army encamped on the Rhine or the Xeres. It is said that, when soldiers in such a situation first find themselves able to indulge without restraint in such a rare and expensive luxury, nothing is to be seen but intoxication. Soon, however, plenty teaches discretion; and after wine has been for a few months their daily fare, they become more temperate than they had ever been in their own country. In the same manner, the final and permanent fruits of liberty are wisdom, moderation, and mercy. Its immediate effects are often atrocious crimes, conflicting errors, scepticism on points the most clear, dogmatism on points the most mysterious. It is just at this crisis that its enemies love to exhibit it. They pull down the scaffolding from the half-finished edifice: they point to the flying dust, the falling bricks, the comfortless rooms, the frightful irregularity of the whole appearance; and then ask in scorn where the promised splendour and comfort is to be found? If such miserable sophisms were to prevail, there never would be a good house, or a good government, in the world.

Ariosto tells a pretty story of a fairy, who by some mysterious law of her nature, was condemned to appear, at certain seasons, in the form of a foul and poisonous snake. Those who injured her during the period of her disguise, were for ever excluded from participation in the blessings which she bestowed. But to those who, in spite of her loathsome aspect, pitied and protected her, she afterwards revealed herself in the beautiful and celestial form which was natural to her, accompanied their steps, granted all their

wishes, filled their houses with wealth, made them happy in love and victorious in war.* Such a spirit is Liberty. At times she takes the form of a hateful reptile. She grovels, she hisses, she stings. But woe to those who in disgust shall venture to crush her! And happy are those who, having dared to receive her in her degraded and frightful shape, shall at length be rewarded by her in the time of her beauty and her glory!

There is only one cure for the evils which newly acquired freedom produces—and that cure is *freedom!* When a prisoner first leaves his cell, he cannot bear the light of day:—he is unable to discriminate colours, or recognise faces. But the remedy is, not to remand him into his dungeon, but to accustom him to the rays of the sun. The blaze of truth and liberty may at first dazzle and bewilder nations which have become half blind in the house of bondage. But let them gaze on, and they will soon be able to bear it. In a few years men learn to reason. The extreme violence of opinions subsides. Hostile theories correct each other. The scattered elements of truth cease to conflict, and begin to coalesce. And at length a system of justice and order is educed out of the chaos.

Many politicians of our time are in the habit of laying it down as a self-evident proposition, that no people ought to be free till they are fit to use their freedom. The maxim is worthy of the fool in the old story, who resolved not to go into the water till he had learnt to swim! If men are to wait for liberty till they become wise and good in slavery, they may indeed wait for ever.

Therefore it is that we decidedly approve of the conduct of Milton and the other wise and good men who, in spite of much that was ridiculous and hateful in the conduct of their associates, stood firmly by the cause of public liberty. We are not aware that the poet has been charged with personal participation in any of the blamable excesses of that time. The favourite topic of his enemies is the line of conduct which he pursued with regard to the execution of the King. Of that celebrated proceeding we by no means approve. Still we must say, in justice to the many eminent persons who concurred in it, and in justice more particularly to the eminent persons who defended it, that nothing can be more absurd than the imputations which, for the last hundred and sixty years, it has been the fashion to cast upon the Regicides. We have throughout abstained from appealing to first principles—we will not appeal to them now. We recur again to the parallel case of the Revolution. What essential distinction can be drawn between the execution of the father and the deposition of the son? What constitutional maxim is there, which applies to the former and not to the latter? The king can do no wrong. If so, James was as innocent as Charles could have been. The minister only ought to be responsible for the acts of the sovereign. If so, why not impeach Jeffreys and retain James? The person of a king is sacred. Was the person of James considered sacred at the Boyne? To discharge cannon against an army in which a king is known to be posted, is to approach pretty near to regicide. Charles, too, it should always be remembered, was put to death by men who had never been exasperated by the hostilities of several years, and who had never been bound to him by any other tie than that which was common to them with all their fellow-citizens. Those who drove James from his throne, who seduced his army, who alienated his friends, who first imprisoned him in his palace, and

* Orlando Furioso, canto 43.

hen turned him out of it, who broke in upon his very slumber by imperious messages, who pursued him with fire and sword from one part of the empire to another, who hanged, drew, and quartered his adherents, and attainted his innocent heir, were his nephew and his two daughters! When we reflect on all these things, we are at a loss to conceive how the same persons who, on the fifth of November thank God for wonderfully conducting his servant King William, and for making all opposition fall before him until he became our King and Governor, can, on the thirtieth of January, contrive to be afraid that the blood of the Royal Martyr may be visited on themselves and their children.

We do not, we repeat, approve of the execution of Charles : not because the constitution exempts the king from responsibility, for we know that all such maxims, however excellent, have their exceptions ; nor because we feel any peculiar interest in his character, for we think that his sentence describes him with perfect justice as " a tyrant, a traitor, a murderer, and a public enemy ; " but because we are convinced that the measure was most injurious to the cause of freedom. He whom it removed was a captive and a hostage : his heir, to whom the allegiance of every royalist was instantly transferred, was at large. The Presbyterians could never have been perfectly reconciled to the father : they had no such rooted enmity to the son. The great body of the people, also, contemplated that proceeding with feelings which, however unreasonable, no government could safely venture to outrage.

But though we think the conduct of the regicides blamable, that of Milton appears to us in a very different light. The deed was done. It could not be undone. The evil was incurred ; and the object was to render it as small as possible. We censure the chiefs of the army for not yielding to the popular opinion ; but we cannot censure Milton for wishing to change that opinion. The very feeling which would have restrained us from committing the act, would have led us, after it had been committed, to defend it against the ravings of servility and superstition. For the sake of public liberty, we wish that the thing had not been done, while the people disapproved of it. But, for the sake of public liberty, we should also have wished the people to approve of it when it was done. If any thing more were wanting to the justification of Milton, the book of Salmasius would furnish it. That miserable performance is now with justice considered only as a beacon to wordcatchers who wish to become statesmen. The celebrity of the man who refuted it, the " Æneæ magni dextra," gives it all its fame with the present generation. In that age the state of things was different. It was not then fully understood how vast an interval separates the mere classical scholar from the political philosopher. Nor can it be doubted that a treatise which, bearing the name of so eminent a critic, attacked the fundamental principles of all free governments, must, if suffered to remained unanswered ; have produced a most pernicious effect on the public mind.

We wish to add a few words relative to another subject on which the enemies of Milton delight to dwell—his conduct during the administration of the Protector. That an enthusiastic votary of liberty should accept office under a military usurper, seems, no doubt, at first sight, extraordinary. But all the circumstances in which the country was then placed were extraordinary. The ambition of Oliver was of no vulgar kind. He never seems to have coveted despotic power. He at first fought sincerely and

manfully for the parliament, and never deserted it till it had deserted its duty. If he dissolved it by force, it was not till he found that the few members who remained after so many deaths, secessions, and expulsions, were desirous to appropriate to themselves a power which they held only in trust, and to inflict upon England the curse of a Venetian oligarchy. But even when thus placed by violence at the head of affairs, he did not assume unlimited power. He gave the country a constitution far more perfect than any which had at that time been known in the world. He reformed the representative system in a manner which has extorted praise even from Lord Clarendon. For himself, he demanded, indeed, the first place in the commonwealth; but with powers scarcely so great as those of a Dutch stadtholder or an American president. He gave the parliament a voice in the appointment of ministers, and left to it the whole legislative authority—not even reserving to himself a veto on its enactments. And he did not require that the chief magistracy should be hereditary in his family. Thus far, we think, if the circumstances of the time, and the opportunities which he had of aggrandising himself be fairly considered, he will not lose by comparison with Washington or Bolivar. Had his moderation been met by corresponding moderation, there is no reason to think that he would have overstepped the line which he had traced for himself: but when he found that his parliaments questioned the authority under which they met, and that he was in danger of being deprived of the restricted power which was absolutely necessary to his personal safety, then, it must be acknowledged, he adopted a more arbitrary policy.

Yet, though we believe that the intentions of Cromwell were at first honest,—though we believe that he was driven from the noble course which he had marked out for himself, by the almost irresistible force of circumstances,—though we admire, in common with all men of all parties, the ability and energy of his splendid administration,—we are not pleading for arbitrary and lawless power, even in his hands. We know that a good constitution is infinitely better than the best despot; but we suspect that at the time of which we speak, the violence of religious and political enmities rendered a stable and happy settlement next to impossible. The choice lay, not between Cromwell and liberty, but between Cromwell and the Stuarts. That Milton chose well, no man can doubt who fairly compares the events of the protectorate with those of the thirty years which succedeed it,—the darkest and most disgraceful in the English annals. Cromwell was evidently laying, though in an irregular manner the foundations of an admirable system. Never before had religious liberty and the freedom of discussion been enjoyed in a greater degree. Never had the national honour been better upheld abroad, or the seat of justice better filled at home. And it was rarely that any opposition, which stopped short of open rebellion, provoked the resentment of the liberal and magnanimous usurper. The institutions which he had established, as set down in the Instrument of Government, and the Humble Petition and Advice, were excellent. His practice, it is true, too often departed from the theory of these institutions. But, had he lived a few years longer, it is probable that his institutions would have survived him, and that his arbitrary practice would have died with him. His power had not been consecrated by ancient prejudices; it was upheld only by his great personal qualities: little, therefore, was to be dreaded from a second Protector, unless he were also a second Oliver Cromwell. *The events* which followed his decease are the most complete vindication

of those who exerted themselves to uphold his authority : for his death dissolved the whole frame of society. The army rose against the parliament, the different corps of the army against each other. Sect raved against sect. Party plotted against party. The presbyterians, in their eagerness to be revenged on the independents, sacrificed their own liberty, and deserted all their old principles. Without casting one glance on the past, or requiring one stipulation for the future, they threw down their freedom at the feet of the most frivolous and heartless of tyrants.

Then came those days, never to be recalled without a blush—the days of servitude without loyalty, and sensuality without love; of dwarfish talents and gigantic vices, the paradise of cold hearts and narrow minds, the golden age of the coward, the bigot, and the slave. The king cringed to his rival, that he might trample on his people, sunk into a viceroy of France, and pocketed, with complacent infamy, her degrading insults, and her more degrading gold. The caresses of harlots, and the jests of buffoons, regulated the measures of a government which had just ability enough to deceive, and just religion enough to persecute. The principles of liberty were the scoff of every grinning courtier, and the "anathema maranatha" of every fawning dean. In every high place, worship was paid to Charles and James —Belial and Moloch; and England propitiated those obscene and cruel idols with the blood of her best and bravest children. Crime succeeded to crime, and disgrace to disgrace, till the race, accursed of God and man, was a second time driven forth, to wander on the face of the earth, and to be a by-word and a shaking of the head to the nations.

Most of the remarks which we have hitherto made on the public character of Milton, apply to him only as one of a large body. We shall proceed to notice some of the peculiarities which distinguished him from his contemporaries. And, for that purpose, it is necessary to take a short survey of the parties into which the political world was at that time divided. We must premise, that our observations are intended to apply only to those who adhered, from a sincere preference, to one or to the other side. At a period of public commotion, every faction, like an Oriental army, is attended by a crowd of camp-followers, an useless and heartless rabble, who prowl round its line of march in the hope of picking up something under its protection, but desert it in the day of battle, and often join to exterminate it after a defeat. England, at the time of which we are treating, abounded with such fickle and selfish politicians, who transferred their support to every government as it rose,—who kissed the hand of the king in 1640, and spit in his face in 1649,—who shouted with equal glee when Cromwell was inaugurated in Westminster Hall, and when he was dug up to be hanged at Tyburn,—who dined on calves' heads or on broiled rumps, and cut down oak-branches or stuck them up, as circumstances altered, without the slightest shame or repugnance. These we leave out of the account. We take our estimate of parties from those who really deserved to be called partisans.

We would speak first of the Puritans, the most remarkable body of men, perhaps, which the world has ever produced. The odious and ridiculous parts of their character lie on the surface. He that runs may read them; nor have there been wanting attentive and malicious observers to point them out. For many years after the Restoration, they were the theme of unmeasured invective and derision. They were exposed to the utmost licentiousness of the press *and of the* stage, at the time when the press and

the stage were most licentious. They were not men of letters; they were as a body unpopular; they could not defend themselves; and the public would not take them under its protection. They were therefore abandoned, without reserve, to the tender mercies of the satirists and dramatists. The ostentatious simplicity of their dress, their sour aspect, their nasal twang, their stiff posture, their long graces, their Hebrew names, the scriptural phrases which they introduced on every occasion, their contempt of human learning, their detestation of polite amusements, were indeed fair game for the laughers. But it is not from the laughers alone that the philosophy of history is to be learnt. And he who approaches this subject should carefully guard against the influence of that potent ridicule which has already misled so many excellent writters.

> " Ecco il fonte del riso, ed ecco il rio
> Che mortali perigli in se contiene:
> Hor qui tener a fren nostro desio,
> Ed esser cauti molto a noi conviene." *

Those who roused the people to resistance,—who directed their measures through a long series of eventful years,—who formed, out of the most unpromising materials, the finest army that Europe had ever seen,—who trampled down king, church, and aristocracy,—who, in the short intervals of domestic sedition and rebellion, made the name of England terrible to every nation on the face of the earth, were no vulgar fanatics. Most of their absurdities were mere external badges, like the signs of freemasonry, or the dresses of friars. We regret that these badges were not more attractive. We regret that a body, to whose courage and talents mankind has owed inestimable obligations, had not the lofty elegance which distinguished some of the adherents of Charles I., or the easy good-breeding for which the court of Charles II. was celebrated. But, if we must make our choice, we shall, like Bassanio in the play, turn from the specious caskets, which contain only the death's head and the fool's head, and fix our choice on the plain leaden chest which conceals the treasure.

The Puritans were men whose minds had derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests. Not content with acknowledging, in general terms, an over-ruling Providence, they habitually ascribed every event to the will of the Great Being, for whose power nothing was too vast, for whose inspection nothing was too minute. To know him, to serve him, to enjoy him, was with them the great end of existence. They rejected with contempt the ceremonious homage which other sects substituted for the pure worship of the soul. Instead of catching occasional glimpses of the Deity through an obscuring veil, they aspired to gaze full on the intolerable brightness, and to commune with him face to face. Hence originated their contempt for terrestrial distinctions. The difference between the greatest and and meanest of mankind seemed to vanish, when compared with the boundless interval which separated the whole race from Him on whom their own eyes were constantly fixed. They recognised no title to superiority but his favour; and, confident of that favour, they despised all the accomplishments and all the dignities of the world. If they were unacquainted with the works of philosophers and poets, they were deeply read in the oracles of God. If their names were not found in the registers of heralds, they felt assured that they were re—

* Gerusalemme Liberata, xv. 57.

corded in the Book of Life. If their steps were not accompanied by a splendid train of menials, legions of ministering angels had charge over them. Their palaces were houses not made with hands; their diadems crowns of glory which should never fade away! On the rich and the eloquent, on nobles and priests, they looked down with contempt: for they esteemed themselves rich in a more precious treasure, and eloquent in a more sublime language, nobles by the right of an earlier creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand. The very meanest of them was a being to whose fate a mysterious and terrible importance belonged—on whose slightest action to spirits of light and darkness looked with anxious interest, who had been destined, before heaven and earth were created, to enjoy a felicity which should continue when heaven and earth should have passed away. Events which shortsighted politicians ascribed to earthly causes, had been ordained on his account. For his sake empires had risen, and flourished, and decayed. For his sake the Almighty had proclaimed his will by the pen of the evangelist and the harp of the prophet. He had been wrested by no common deliverer from the grasp of no common foe. He had been ransomed by the sweat of no vulgar agony, by the blood of no earthly sacrifice. It was for him that the sun had been darkened, that the rocks had been rent, that the dead had arisen, that all nature had shuddered at the sufferings of her expiring God!

Thus the Puritan was made up of two different men, the one all self-abasement, penitence, gratitude, passion; the other proud, calm, inflexible, sagacious. He prostrated himself in the dust before his Maker: but he set his foot on the neck of his king. In his devotional retirement, he prayed with convulsions, and groans, and tears. He was half maddened by glorious or terrible illusions. He heard the lyres of angels, or the tempting whispers of fiends. He caught a gleam of the beatific vision, or woke screaming from dreams of everlasting fire. Like Vane, he thought himself intrusted with the sceptre of the millennial year. Like Fleetwood, he cried in the bitterness of his soul that God had hid his face from him. But when he took his seat in the council, or girt on his sword for war, these tempestuous workings of the soul had left no perceptible trace behind them. People who saw nothing of the godly but their uncouth visages, and heard nothing from them but their groans and their whining hymns, might laugh at them. But those had little reason to laugh who encountered them in the hall of debate or in the field of battle. These fanatics brought to civil and military affairs a coolness of judgment, and an immutability of purpose, which some writers have thought inconsistent with their religious zeal, but which were in fact the necessary effects of it. The intensity of their feelings on one subject made them tranquil on every other. One overpowering sentiment had subjected to itself pity and hatred, ambition and fear. Death had lost its terrors, and pleasure its charms. They had their smiles and their tears, their raptures and their sorrows, but not for the things of this world. Enthusiasm had made them stoics, and cleared their minds from every vulgar passion and prejudice, and raised them above the influence of danger and of corruption. It sometimes might lead them to pursue unwise ends, but never to choose unwise means. They went through the world, like Sir Artegale's iron man Talus with his flail, crushing and trampling down oppressors, mingling with human beings, but having neither part nor lot in human infirmities; insen-

sible to fatigue, to pleasure, and to pain; not to be pierced by any weapon, not to be withstood by any barrier.

Such we believe to have been the character of the Puritans. We perceive the absurdity of their manners. We dislike the sullen gloom of their domestic habits. We acknowledge that the tone of their minds was often injured by straining after things too high for mortal reach: and we know that, in spite of their hatred of popery, they too often fell into the worst vices of that bad system, intolerance and extravagant austerity,—that they had their anchorites and their crusades, their Dunstans and their De Montforts, their Dominics and their Escobars. Yet, when all circumstances are taken into consideration, we do not hesitate to pronounce them a brave, a wise, an honest, and a useful body.

The Puritans espoused the cause of civil liberty mainly because it was the cause of religion. There was another party, by no means numerous, but distinguished by learning and ability, which co-operated with them on very different principles. We speak of those whom Cromwell was accustomed to call the Heathens, men who were, in the phraseology of that time, doubting Thomases or careless Gallios with regard to religious subjects, but passionate worshippers of freedom. Heated by the study of ancient literature, they set up their country as their idol, and proposed to themselves the heroes of Plutarch as their examples. They seem to have borne some resemblance to the Brissotines of the French Revolution. But it is not very easy to draw the line of distinction between them and their devout associates, whose tone and manner they sometimes found it convenient to affect, and sometimes, it is probable, imperceptibly adopted.

We now come to the Royalists. We shall attempt to speak of them, as we have spoken of their antagonists, with perfect candour. We shall not charge upon a whole party the profligacy and baseness of the horseboys, gamblers, and bravoes, whom the hope of licence and plunder attracted from all the dens of Whitefriars to the standard of Charles, and who disgraced their associates by excesses which, under the stricter discipline of the parliamentary armies, were never tolerated. We will select a more favourable specimen. Thinking, as we do, that the cause of the King was the cause of bigotry and tyranny, we yet cannot refrain from looking with complacency on the character of the honest old Cavaliers. We feel a national pride in comparing them with the instruments which the despots of other countries are compelled to employ,—with the mutes who throng their antechambers, and the janissaries who mount guard at their gates. Our royalist countrymen were not heartless dangling courtiers, bowing at every step, and simpering at every word. They were not mere machines for destruction dressed up in uniforms, caned into skill, intoxicated into valour, defending without love, destroying without hatred. There was a freedom in their subserviency, a nobleness in their very degradation. The sentiment of individual independence was strong within them. They were indeed misled, but by no base or selfish motive. Compassion and romantic honour, the prejudices of childhood, and the venerable names of history, threw over them a spell potent as that of Duessa; and like the Red-Cross Knight, they thought that they were doing battle for an injured beauty, while they defended a false and loathsome sorceress. In truth they scarcely entered at all into the merits of the political question. It was not for a treacherous king or an intolerant church that they

fought; but for the old banner which had waved in so many battles over the heads of their fathers, and for the altars at which they had received the hands of their brides. Though nothing could be more erroneous than their political opinions, they possessed, in a far greater degree than their adversaries, those qualities which are the grace of private life. With many of the vices of the Round Table, they had also many of its virtues,—courtesy, generosity, veracity, tenderness, and respect for women. They had far more both of profound and of polite learning than the Puritans. Their manners were more engaging, their tempers more amiable, their tastes more elegant, and their households more cheerful.

Milton did not strictly belong to any of the classes which we have described. He was not a Puritan. He was not a freethinker. He was not a Cavalier. In his character the noblest qualities of every party were combined in harmonious union. From the Parliament and from the Court, from the conventicle and from the Gothic cloister, from the gloomy and sepulchral circles of the Roundheads, and from the Christmas revel of the hospitable Cavalier, his nature selected and drew to itself whatever was great and good, while it rejected all the base and pernicious ingredients by which those finer elements were defiled. Like the Puritans, he lived

"As ever in his great Taskmaster's eye."

Like them, he kept his mind continually fixed on an Almighty Judge and an eternal reward. And hence he acquired their contempt of external circumstances, their fortitude, their tranquillity, their inflexible resolution. But not the coolest sceptic or the most profane scoffer was more perfectly free from the contagion of their frantic delusions, their savage manners, their ludicrous jargon, their scorn of science, and their aversion to pleasure. Hating tyranny with a perfect hatred, he had nevertheless all the estimable and ornamental qualities which were almost entirely monopolised by the party of the tyrant. There was none who had a stronger sense of the value of literature, a finer relish for every elegant amusement, or a more chivalrous delicacy of honour and love. Though his opinions were democratic, his tastes and his associations were such as harmonise best with monarchy and aristocracy. He was under the influence of all the feelings by which the gallant Cavaliers were misled. But of those feelings he was the master, and not the slave. Like the hero of Homer, he enjoyed all the pleasures of fascination; but he was not fascinated. He listened to the song of the Syrens; yet he glided by without being seduced to their fatal shore. He tasted the cup of Circe; but he bore about him a sure antidote against the effects of its bewitching sweetness. The illusions which captivated his imagination never impaired his reasoning powers. The statesman was proof against the splendour, the solemnity, and the romance, which enchanted the poet. Any person who will contrast the sentiments expressed in his Treatises on Prelacy, with the exquisite lines on ecclesiastical architecture and music in the Penseroso which was published about the same time, will understand our meaning. This is an inconsistency which, more than any thing else, raises his character in our estimation; because it shows how many private tastes and feelings he sacrificed, in order to do what he considered his duty to mankind. It is the very struggle of the noble Othello. His heart relents; but his hand is firm. He does nought in hate, but all in honour. He kisses the beautiful deceiver before he destroys her.

That from which the public character of Milton derives its great and

peculiar splendour, still remains to be mentioned. If he exerted himself overthrow a forsworn king and a persecuting hierarchy, he exerted him in conjunction with others. But the glory of the battle which he fought that species of freedom which is the most valuable, and which was t the least understood, the freedom of the human mind, is all his own. Th sands and tens of thousands among his contemporaries raised their voi against ship-money and the star-chamber. But there were few indeed w discerned the more fearful evils of moral and intellectual slavery, and benefits which would result from the liberty of the press and the unfette exercise of private judment. These were the objects which Milton ju conceived to be the most important. He was desirous that the people sho think for themselves, as well as tax themselves; and be emancipated f the dominion of prejudice, as well as from that of Charles. He knew t those who, with the best intentions, overlooked these schemes of refo and contented themselves with pulling down the king and imprisoning malignants, acted like the heedless brothers in his own poem, who, in th eagerness to disperse the train of the sorcerer, neglected the means of berating the captive. They thought only of conquering, when they sho have thought of disenchanting.

> "Oh, ye mistook! Ye should have snatch'd his wand!
> . . . . . without his rod reversed,
> And backward mutters of dissevering power,
> We cannot free the Lady that sits here
> In stony fetters fix'd, and motionless."

To reverse the rod, to spell the charm backward, to break the ties wh bound a stupified people to the seat of enchantment, was the noble aim Milton. To this all his public conduct was directed. For this he joined Presbyterians—for this he forsook them. He fought their perilous batt but he turned away with disdain from their insolent triumph. He saw t they, like those whom they had vanquished, were hostile to the liberty thought. He therefore joined the Independents, and called upon Cromw to break the secular chain, and to save free conscience from the paw of Presbyterian wolf.* With a view to the same great object, he attacked licensing system, in that sublime treatise which every statesman sho wear as a sign upon his hand, and as frontlets between his eyes. His tacks were, in general, directed less against particular abuses, than agai those deeply seated errors on which almost all abuses are founded, the s vile worship of eminent men, and the irrational dread of innovation.

That he might shake the foundations of these debasing sentiments m effectually, he always selected for himself the boldest literary services. never came up in the rear when the outworks had been carried, and breach entered. He pressed into the forlorn hope. At the beginning of changes, he wrote with incomparable energy and eloquence against bishops. But, when his opinion seemed likely to prevail, he passed on other subjects, and abandoned prelacy to the crowd of writers who n hastened to insult a falling party. There is no more hazardous enterpr than that of bearing the torch of truth into those dark and infected recess in which no light has ever shone. But it was the choice and the pleasure Milton to penetrate the noisome vapours, and to brave the terrible explosi Those who most disapprove of his opinions must respect the hardihood w

* Sonnet to Cromwell.

which he maintained them. He, in general, left to others the credit of expounding and defending the popular parts of his religious and political creed. He took his own stand upon those which the great body of his countrymen reprobated as criminal, or derided as paradoxial. He stood up for divorce and regicide. He ridiculed the Eikon. He attacked the prevailing systems of education. His radiant and beneficent career resembled that of the god of light and fertility,—

> "Nitor in adversum; nec me, qui cætera, vincit
> Impetus, et rapido contrarius evehor orbi."

It is to be regretted that the prose writings of Milton should, in our time, be so little read. As compositions, they deserve the attention of every man who wishes to become acquainted with the full power of the English language. They abound with passages, compared with which the finest declamations of Burke sink into insignificance. They are a perfect field of cloth of gold. The style is stiff with gorgeous embroidery. Not even in the earlier books of the Paradise Lost has he ever risen higher than in those parts of his controversial works in which his feelings, excited by conflict, find a vent in bursts of devotional and lyric rapture. It is, to borrow his own majestic language, "a sevenfold of hallelujas and harping symphonies."*

We had intended to look more closely at these performances, to analyse the peculiarities of the diction, to dwell at some length on the sublime widom of the Areopagitica, and the nervous rhetoric of the Iconoclast, and to point out some of those magnificent passages which occur in the Treatise of Reformation, and the Animadversions on the Remonstrant. But the length to which our remarks have already extended renders this impossible.

We must conclude. And yet we can scarcely tear ourselves away from the subject. The days immediately following the publication of this relic of Milton appear to be peculiarly set apart, and consecrated to his memory. And we shall scarcely be censured if, on this his festival, we be found lingering near his shrine, how worthless soever may be the offering which we bring to it. While this book lies on our table, we seem to be contemporaries of the great poet. We are transported a hundred and fifty years back. We can almost fancy that we are visiting him in his small lodging; that we see him sitting at the old organ beneath the faded green hangings; that we can catch the quick twinkle of his eyes, rolling in vain to find the day; that we are reading in the lines of his noble countenance the proud and mournful history of his glory and his affliction! We image to ourselves the breathless silence in which we should listen to his slightest word; the passionate veneration with which we should kneel to kiss his hand and weep upon it; the earnestness with which we should endeavour to console him, if indeed such a spirit could need consolation, for the neglect of an age unworthy of his talents and his virtues; the eagerness with which we should contest with his daughters, or with his Quaker friend Elwood, the privilege of reading Homer to him, or of taking down the immortal accents which flowed from his lips.

These are perhaps foolish feelings. Yet we cannot be ashamed of them; nor shall we be sorry if what we have written shall in any degree excite

* The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy, book ii.

them in other minds. We are not much in the habit of idolizing either the living or the dead. And we think that there is no more certain indication of a weak and ill-regulated intellect than that propensity which, for want of a better name, we will venture to christen *Boswellism*. But *there are* a few characters which have stood the closest scrutiny and the severest tests, which have been tried in the furnace and have proved pure, which have been weighed in the balance and have not been found wanting, which have been declared sterling by the general consent of mankind, and which are visibly stamped with the image aud superscription of the Most High. These great men we trust that we know how to prize; and of these was Milton. The sight of his books, the sound of his name, are refreshing to us. His thoughts resemble those celestial fruits and flowers which the Virgin Martyr of Massinger sent down from the gardens of Paradise to the earth, distinguished from the productions of others soils, not only by their superior bloom and sweetness, but by their miraculous efficacy to invigorate and to heal. They are powerful, not only to delight, but to elevate and purify. Nor do we envy the man who can study either the life or the writings of the Great Poet and Patriot, without aspiring to emulate, not indeed the sublime works with which his genius has enriched our literature, but the zeal with which he laboured for the public good, the fortitude with which he endured every private calamity, the lofty disdain with which he looked down on temptations and dangers, the deadly hatred which he bore to bigots and tyrants, and the faith which he so sternly kept with his country and with his fame.

DANTE.*

The limits of a late Number † precluded us from entering, as fully as we would have wished, into the subject of Dante. We resume it the more willingly, from our having just received a work, published two or three years ago in Italy, but almost unknown in England, having for its object to ascertain, whether this great poet was an inventor, or an imitator only. The continental antiquaries and scholars have eagerly laid hold of a manuscript, said to have been discovered about the beginning of the present century, and affording evidence, according to some persons, that he had borrowed from others the whole plan and conception of his wonderful work. The question, indeed, is of ancient date; and, long before such value had been set upon this manuscript, was so perplexed and prolonged, as now to call for definitive elucidation. We trust we shall place our readers in a condition to decide it for themselves.

An extract, or rather a short abstract, of an old Vision, written in Latin, appeared in a pamphlet published at Rome in 1801, with an insinuation that the primitive model of Dante's poem had at length been discovered. Some reader of new publications transmitted the intelligence of this discovery to a

* Inquiry into the Originality of Dante's Poetry. By F. Cancellieri. Vol. xxx. p. 317. September, 1818.

† No. lviii. Art. ix. p. 453. In the article here referred to, there is an interesting sketch of the commentators on Dante, with some admirable observations on the works of that distinished poet. The reader will find critical remarks on Dante's poetry in various parts of the burgh Review. See Vol. i. p. 307. Vol. xxiv. p. 49. Vol. xlii. p. 316.

German journalist, who received it as of the utmost importance; and from him, a writer in a French paper (the *Publiciste* of July, 1809) transcribed, embellished, and diffused it over all Europe, through the medium of his universal language. Having nothing to do with politics, every body received it upon the faith of the author of the pamphlet, by whom alone the old manuscript had been read; and it was immediately settled, among the wits and critics of the day, that Dante was but the versifier of the ideas of others. Mr. *Cancellieri*, a professed black-letter scholar, and animated, no doubt, with a laudable zeal for religion as well as literature, published the Vision entire in 1814, on the return of his Holiness to Rome. He accompanied it with an Italian translation, the whole comprising some sixty pages, preceded by twice that number of pages of his own remarks. In this ample dissertation, the question, however, is merely glanced at;—and all that its readers can make out with certainty is, that the learned author had selected this curious subject chiefly to astonish the world by his multifarious erudition in a book which might have been not inaptly entitled—"*De rebus omnibus, et de quibusdam aliis.*" It must be acknowledged, however, that, amidst the unbounded variety of his citations, we meet with some things which it is agreeable to know; but they have so little to do with Dante, that we are really but little beholden to him on the present occasion; and have been obliged to refer to many other authorities, in order to disentangle ourselves from the perplexities into which he had brought us.

Mr. Cancellieri apprizes us that there existed two famous *Alberics*, both monks of Monte-Cassino; but he thought it immaterial to add, that the first was one of the few monks to whom the civilisation of the world is not without obligations—he having, in the midst of the barbarism of the eleventh century, written treatises upon logic, astronomy, and music.* His works probably contributed more to form the mind of Dante, than the *Visions* of the other to form the plan of his poem.

The latter Alberic was born about the year 1100, soon after the death of the former. When in his ninth year, he fell sick, and remained in a lethargy for nine days. Whilst in this state, a dove appeared to him, and catching him by the hair, lifted him up to the presence of St. Peter, who, with two angels, conducted the child across purgatory, and, mounting thence from planet to planet, transported him into Paradise, there to contemplate the glory of the blessed. His vision restored him to perfect health;—the miraculous cure was published to the world;—the monks received the child at Monte-Cassino;—and, because he repeated his vision tolerably well, and was of a rich family, they devoted him to St. Benedict, before he had reached his tenth year. He lived from that time in constant penitence, tasting neither flesh nor wine, and never wearing shoes; and the monastery had thus the glory of possessing a living saint, who, by his virtue, confirmed the belief that he had seen Purgatory and Paradise.

They took care to have the vision of Alberic reduced to writing, first by one of their own lettered brethren, and, some years after, by Alberic himself, assisted by the pen of Peter the Deacon, of whom there are yet remaining some historical pieces which occasionally throw light upon the darkness of that age. We subjoin what he says of Alberic in his own words.†

* Mabillon, An. Bened. vol. v. b. 65.

† Tanta usque in hodiernum abstinentia, tanta morum gravitate pollet, ut pœnas peccatorum perspexisse, et pertimuisse. et gloriam sanctorum vidisse nemo quis dubitet: non enim carnem, non adipem, non vinum, ab illo tempore usque nunc, Deo annuente, assumpsit; calciamento nullo penitus tempore utitur; et sic, in tanta cordis, ac corporis contritione, et humilitate usque nunc

If there existed but this one vision before the time of Dante, there i be some ground for presuming, that it suggested to him the idea of his p But the truth is, that such visions abounded from the very earliest a Christianity. St. Cyprian had visions,—St. Perpetua had visions,- both, with many others, were declared divine by St. Augustine. The re tions of each turned upon the doctrine which each thought the be establishing the faith. Accordingly, the creed written for the church which he presided, by St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, was dictated to h a vision by Saint John the Evangelist. But the zeal of the early bishop soon replaced by the interested views of their successors. About the century, the great object was, to establish the doctrine of Purgator which the period of expiation was shortened in favour of souls, in pr tion to the alms given by their heirs to the Church. The monk Alberi cribes Purgatory with minuteness, and sees Hell only at a distance. those visions having the same object, resembled each other; and wh will take the trouble to examine the legends of the saints, and archi the monasteries, will find hundreds, of the same epoch, and the same t It may be said, that Dante either profited by all, or by none; but if be any one to which he can be supposed to be indebted more than anc it is the vision of an English monk, not named by any one that we k though told circumstantially by Mathew Paris.* The English monk, the Italian, gives no description of Hell, but, like Dante, describes his gatory as a mount; the passage from Purgatory to Paradise, a vast ga intersected by delightful woods as in our poet; both had their visio the holy week;—both allot the same punishments to the same infa crimes, with some other points of resemblance, which those who are cu may find in Mathew Paris. The vision related by that historian suffi give an idea of all the others; and proves, indeed, that there existed, a time, a systematic style for working, in this way, upon popular credu The English monk also had his vision immediately after a long and gerous malady, and in a state of lethargy and inanition, which lasted days, also followed by a miraculous cure.

It is sufficiently probable, that Dante had read the history of Ma Paris, the historian having died before the birth of the poet; and still probable, that he had read the vision of Alberic. The resemblance v we have pointed out between the visions of the two monks, and the in of other visions of the same kind, show that there was then establishe the popular belief, a sort of Visionary mythology, which Dante adopt the same manner as the mythology of Polytheism had been adopte Homer. Besides, the discovery of the manuscript of the Vision of All about which so much noise has been made for the last eighteen years, took place about a century ago. It is mentioned, but without much s by Mazzuchelli, Pelli, and Tiraboschi.† Mr. Bottari was the first confronted it with the poem of Dante, in the year 1753; and the v which turns the heads of so many crudite persons, when they make coveries to their own infinite surprise, made him imagine he had discov in Dante, divers close imitations of the manuscript. The following is o his great instances. Dante calls the Devil "the great worm," (Inf

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in hodiernum, in hoc Casinensi cœnobio perseverat, ut multa illum quæ alios lateant v tuenda, vel desideranda vidisse, etiamsi lingua taceret, vita loqueretur. (De Viris illustr.

* Hist. Ang. ad an. 1196.

† Mazzuch. Scritt. It. vol. i. p. 290. Pelli Memor. p. 122. Tirab. Storia, &c. vol. iii

1.) and therefore he must have copied from Alberic, who saw "a orm that devoured souls." Monsignor Bottari was a prelate; the of the pamphlet is a Benedictine abbot; Mr. Cancellieri is a good , and all three are antiquarians. How has it escaped them, that the called "the serpent" in the Scriptures, and that "worm" was tly used for "serpent" by the old Italian writers? Shakspeare indeed in the same sense, in "Anthony and Cleopatra;" and Johnson, in upon the passage, adduces a variety of other instances; in which the as so employed. Another alleged imitation is, that in Purgatory an asps Dante with his talon, and raises him on high, in the same man- Alberic had been caught by the hair, and lifted up by a dove.—Here, ee pious persons have forgotten their Bible. In the two chapters of retained in the Vulgate, Habakkuk is thus caught and lifted up by an and the prophet Ezekiel says, chap. viii. v. 3., "And he put forth the an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head, and the spirit lifted between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of It is certain that ingenuity and erudition will discover resemblances gs the most different from each other. In the passage of Sterne, s so beautiful, so original, and so well known, of the recording angel g out the oath with a tear, we doubt not that Dr. Ferriar would have d a plagiarism from Alberic, had that ingenious person seen the nth section of the manuscript. We give an abstract of the pas- or the use of the Doctor's next edition. "A demon holds a book, in are written the sins of a particular man; and an angel drops on it, phial, a tear which the sinner had shed in doing a good action: and s are washed out."

possible that Dante may have taken some ideas here and there from ions which abounded in his age. There are involuntary plagiarisms, no writer can wholly avoid,—for much of what we think and ex- s but a new combination of what we have read and heard. But re- ences in great geniuses are sparks that produce a mighty flame; and te, like the monks, employed the machinery of visions, the result roves, that much of a great writer's originality may consist in attaining blime objects by the same means which others had employed for mere ;. He conceived and executed the project of creating the Language e Poetry of a nation—of exposing all the poetical wounds of his coun- f teaching the Church and the States of Italy, that the imprudence Popes, and the civil wars of the cities, and the consequent introduc- f foreign arms, must lead to the eternal slavery and disgrace of the s. He raised himself to a place among the reformers of morals, the ers of crimes, and the asserters of orthodoxy in religion; and he called aid Heaven itself, with all its terrors and all its hopes, in what was inated by himself—

> —— "the sacred work, that made
> Both Heaven and Earth copartners in his toil."
> *Il poema sacro*
> *Al qual ha posto mano e Cielo e Terra.*—Parad. Cant. 25.

explain how he executed his vast design, it appears to us indispensable we should give a slight sketch of the political and religious state of Italy period when he wrote.

bertson has described Europe, in the middle ages, as peopled with s attached to the soil, who had no consolation but their religion: and

this indeed was, for many centuries, the great instrument of good and evil even in temporal concerns. The feudal lords were restrained only by the fear of Heaven, and the monarch had no army but such as that military aristocracy supplied: the canon law was the only instrument by which justice could oppose force; and that instrument was wielded only by the clergy. This last circumstance was the chief foundation of the great ascendancy of the Popes. A strong yearning after justice and law instigated the people of Italy to become free; and the circumstances of the times were such, that for their freedom they were indebted to the Church. Robertson, however, as well as many others copying after Machiavelli, has erroneously ascribed the misfortunes of the succeeding generations to the authority usurped over princes by Gregory VII. The ill effects of that usurpation were not sensibly felt in Italy until a much later period; and the truth is, that Italian liberty and civilisation were greatly promoted by it in the first instance; and advanced by rapid strides, from the age of Gregory to that of Dante, a period of 200 years. The acts of that ambitious Pontiff, however, prolific as they were of important consequences to his country, require undoubtedly to be kept in view by all who would understand its history.

The daring schemes which he conceived and executed in a few years, and in his old age, may be said to have been accomplished by the use of the single word—Excommunication. By this talisman, he compelled the sovereigns of his day to acknowledge, that all the lands in their dominions allotted for the support of the clergy belonged in property to the Pope; and our England was the first that made the concession: two Italians at that time successively enjoyed the see of Canterbury for nearly forty years.* By this notable device, the Church at once acquired a very large portion of all the cultivated lands of Europe; for the monks had very generally employed themselves in clearing and cultivating the soil—received large donations from potentates and kings—and had thus become wealthy and powerful proprietors. By this act of annexation, however, they became the immediate subjects of the Pope; and a great portion of the riches of Europe began, in consequence, to flow in upon Italy.

The next of Gregory's gigantic measures was, if possible, still more bold and important, and this was the absolute prohibition of marriage to all the orders of the priesthood. He had here to struggle with the inclinations of the clergy themselves, and of the Italian clergy in particular. But when the difficulty was once overcome, the advantage gained was prodigious—to the order itself—to the popedom—and to the country which was its seat. The great brotherhood of the Catholic clergy, receiving their subsistence directly from the Church—exempted from secular jurisdiction, and now loosened from all the ties of natural affection,—must have felt themselves but feebly attached to their respective countries, and looked almost exclusively, as they taught their fellow-citizens to look, to Rome as the place which was to give law to the world.

The last grand project of Gregory was that of the crusades,† which, though he did not live long enough to carry into execution, he left to his successor already matured and digested. Then it was that kings became subalterns in command, fighting with their subjects in Asia during half a century, under orders issued from Rome; and Rome and Italy became,

* Lanfranc and St. Anselm, from 1070 to 1109.

† This appears by two of his own letters. See Collect. of Labbeus.

of course, the centre of influence and authority. All these advantages, however, would have been of but little value, without freedom; and of this, also, the sovereign Pontiff happened to be the first dispenser:—for Gregory, in his first experiment of excommunication, released the Italians from their oath of fealty to the emperor, who had previously governed them as vassals.

It is under these circumstances that we behold, immediately after the death of this Pope, and even in his lifetime, the cities of Italy suddenly improving in population, wealth, and power—palaces of independent magistrates rising to view where there were before but hamlets and slaves—and republics starting forth as if out of nothing. The holy war had delivered Europe in general from the slavery of the soil; every man who took up arms for the crusade became free; and the labourer in Italy began to till the earth on his own account. The military aristocracies and monarchies being employed with their armed forces in distant expeditions, had no longer the same oppressive preponderance at home. The maritime preparations for the crusades were undertaken by the cities of Italy—danger nerved the courage of every class—and navigation, by opening the exportation of manufactures, increased industry, wealth, and knowledge. Florence, for example, supplied all nations with her woollen cloths; and Milan furnished all the arms used by the crusaders, and the princes of Europe. The latter city, at that period of her liberty, had a population triple what it is at the present day. It was said the country was depopulated to supply the manufactures in the towns. But how could so many millions have been subsisted without agriculture? It was then that Italy crowded every port with her galleys, and every market with her merchandise. The wealth thus resulting from commerce served to divide and distribute the property of the land, and to multiply the number of those interested in maintaining the laws and independence of their country. The enormous inequality of fortunes disappeared, and the weight of the capitalists was opposed to the ascendancy of the ancient nobles. It was then that the people of Pisa became masters of the Balearic, and discovered the Canary islands—that Genoa was fortified with strong walls in the space of two months—that Milan, and other towns of Lombardy, having seen their children massacred, their houses and churches burned, their habitations rased—and, having been reduced to live two years unsheltered in the fields,—resumed their arms, routed Frederick Barbarossa, who returned with a formidable force, and compelled him to sign the peace of Constance, acknowledging their independence.

During all this time, it is true that most of those States were engaged in civil wars: but they had arms in their hands; and when the common enemy appeared, they knew how to join in defending their common liberties. The Italians, having thrown off the foreign yoke, gave their aid to the Popes, who were constantly occupied in conflict with the Emperors; and the Church had thus an interest in favouring independence and democracy. But, by degrees, she became tired of using the arms of the Italian States as her defence, though the safest and most natural for her to employ; and, having contributed towards the liberty of Italy, thought she had the right to invade it. Excommunications had then been hurled against friends and enemies, till they began to be less formidable; and the Popes adopted the policy of introducing foreign conquerors, and sharing their conquests. It was then that they *and the kings* of France became constant and close al-

lies. In the lifetime of Dante, a French prince, aided by the Pope, came for the first time into Italy, usurping the states of old dynasties in the name of the Holy See—promising liberty, and preaching concord to republics, but in fact dividing still more, in order to enslave them. The *Guelfi* professed themselves supporters of the Church, and the *Ghibelini* of the Empire, but without much caring for the one or the other. The true question between them was, whether the wealthy citizens or the people should govern the state; and, in the continual danger of foreign invasion, the popular party found its interest in attaching itself to the Church and to France against Germany, whilst the higher classes were more interested in joining the Emperors against the Popes and the French. From the political conduct of Dante when a magistrate, it is evident that he condemned the madness of both parties; for he sent the leaders of both into banishment. But it is also clear that he was more afraid of France than of Germany, and not over fond of democracy.

The true reason of his exile was his refusal to receive a prince of France sent by Boniface VIII., under the pretext of pacifying their dissensions. After his exile, he openly embraced the Ghibeline party, and composed a Latin treatise, *De Monarchia*, to prove that all the misfortunes of Italy sprang from the false doctrine, that the Popes had a right to interfere in temporal concerns. France having, at that time, contrived that the Popes should reside at Avignon, for the purposes of more absolute control, and Frenchmen having been successively raised to the Holy See, as being more devoted to French interests, our poet addressed a letter to the Cardinals from his exile, recommending strongly that they should elect an Italian Pope.* It was with those views, and under those circumstances, in so far as politics were concerned, that he wrote his poem.

But, notwithstanding the corruption and senseless ambition of the Church, and its consequent unpopularity, Religion still maintained its primitive influence. The first crusade raised almost all Europe in arms, by an opinion, suddenly diffused, that the end of the world and the general judgment were at hand, and that the holy war was the sole expiation of sins. These enterprises had been abandoned during the lifetime of our poet; but the dread of the end of the world continued to agitate Christendom for eighty years after his death. Leonardo Aretino, an historian known for the extent of his knowledge, and the share he had in the affairs of Italy and Europe, was an eye-witness of an event which took place in 1400. We shall give his account translated *verbatim*.

"In the midst of the alarms and troubles of the wars, either begun or impending between the States of Italy, an extraordinary occurrence took place. All the inhabitants of each state dressed themselves in white. This multitude went forth with extreme devotion. They passed to the neighbouring states, humbly craving peace and mercy. Their journey lasted usually ten days; and their food during this time was bread and water. None were seen in the towns that were not dressed in white. The people went without danger into an enemy's country, whither, a few days before, they would not have dared to approach. No one ever thought of betraying another, and strangers were never insulted. It was a universal truce tacitly understood between all enemies. This lasted for about two months; but its origin is not clear. It was confidently affirmed to have come down from the Alps into Lombardy, whence it spread with astonishing rapidity over all Italy. The inhabitants of Lucca were the first who came in a body to Florence. Their presence suddenly excited an ardent devotion, to such a degree that even those who, at the commencement, treated this enthusiasm with contempt, were the first to change their dress and join the procession, as if they were suddenly impelled by a heavenly inspiration. The people of Florence divided themselves into four parties; two of which, consisting of a countless multitude of men, women, and children, went to Arezzo. The remaining two took other directions, and, wherever they came, the in-

* Giovanni Villani, b. 9. chap. 134.

abitants dressed themselves in white, and followed their example. During the two months that his devotion lasted, war was never thought of; but, no sooner had it passed away, than the people summed their arms, and the previous state of agitation was renewed." *Aret. Hist. Flor.* b. 12. .1.

Such, in that age, was the force of religion; and Dante, therefore, naturally employed its terrors as the most effective means of touching the passions of his contemporaries. But religion, in Italy especially, was overgrown with heresies and schisms, which often produced the most sanguinary conflicts. Saint Francis founded his order about the beginning of he 13th century; and preached the faith, according to the doctrines of the Church of Rome, in opposition to the sects which the Italian chronicles of hat age call Valdesi, Albigesi, Cattari, and Paterini, but more commonly by the latter name. These four sects were all in the main Manicheans. At the same time, St. Dominick arrived from Spain, carrying fire and sword wherever his opinions were disputed. It was he who founded the Inquisition; and was himself the first *magister sacri palati*, an office always held at Rome, even in our own time, by a Dominican, who examines new books, and decides upon their publication. Before the institution of those two orders, the monks were almost all of the different rules of St. Benedict, reformed by St. Bernard and other abbots. But, being occupied in tilling the land, or in perusing manuscripts of ancient authors,—in fine, never going beyond their convents, unless to become the ministers of kingdoms, where they sometimes exercised kingly power,—their wealth, education, and even pride, rendered them unfit for the business of running from place to place, and employing hypocrisy, impudence, and cruelty, in the service of the Popes. St. Bernard, by his eloquence and rare talents, exercised great influence over kings and pontiffs. He succeeded in firing Europe to undertake the crusade; but, to give durability to the opinions he produced, there was still wanting the pertinacity and roguery of the mendicant friars, to exhibit to the people spectacles of humility and privation, and of *auto-da-fe*. They had their convents in towns, and spread themselves over the country: whilst the Benedictines were living like great feudal lords in their castles. Hence, the Italians carefully make the distinction of *Monaci*, and *Frati*. The former were always more or less useful to agriculture, remarkable for the luxury in which they lived, receiving amongst them only persons of condition for the most part, and each congregation having a sort of monarchical constitution, of which the abbot was absolute chief. The constitution of the Frati was, on the other hand, at all times more or less democratic. They have always been meddling with affairs of state, and family affairs —

"*Scire volunt secreta domus, atque inde timeri.*"

The Jesuits, who have been lately re-established, are also mendicant *Frati*. Notwithstanding their great wealth, they observed the form, in order to preserve the right of begging, by sending out their *conversi* (lay-brothers) with sacks, three or four times a year, to beg for their convents. Having been established three centuries later than the others, they took advantage of this, to give refinement to the arts, and to avoid the faults of those who preceded them. Mathew Paris, who was nearly contemporary with Saint Francis and Saint Dominick, has given pictures of their new flocks, which might be taken for an abstract of all that has been written from the days of Pascal to the present, concerning the Jesuits. "The people," says he, "called them hypocrites and successors of antichrist,

pseudo-preachers, flatterers and counsellors of kings and princes, despisers and supplanters of bishops, violators of royal marriage-beds, prevaricators of confessions, who, wandering over unknown provinces, minister to the audacity of sin." (*Ad an.* 1256, p. 939. *Edit.* 1640.) It is inconceivable what an ascendancy was exercised by the Dominicans and Franciscans in the time of our poet over the passions of individuals, the opinions of the people, and the powers of the State. The Franciscan, Fra Giovanni di Vicenza, possessed unbounded authority in Lombardy, changing the laws, leading towns and provinces in his train; instigating the civil animosities of that unhappy people in obedience to the fatal policy of the Popes; and, when harangues and intrigues failed, making himself obeyed by *auto-da-fe*. By a document published not long since by Mr. Marini, it appears that *auto-da-fe* were multiplied by the Dominicans, even beyond the wishes and orders of the court of Rome. It is a brief of Pope Benedict XI., dated the 11th of March, 1304, and addressed to the Inquisitors of Padua, ordering them to reverse their iniquitous sentences, and to go on with their trade of preaching and burning, in such a manner, that the outcries of the people should no longer reach his ears. Benedict XI. was himself a Dominican; and perhaps wished, like many other sovereigns, to profit by the injustice of his agents, without appearing to be a party.

At the very time that these friars were setting the example of the most infamous vices, they appear also to have originated the most sacrilegious heresies. The mendicants not only continued to cry up their innumerable antiquated visions, but invented new ones still more absurd, which they continued to have revealed, sworn to, and believed. The University of Paris was for several years agitated, Europe scandalised, and the Vatican occupied, without knowing how to extricate itself, with a long trial of the Dominicans for a singular attempt, aided by a Franciscan fanatic, to substitute the prophetic visions of the Abbé Joachim, with some supplements of their own, for the New Testament. Mathew Paris, either from not being exactly informed of what was passing abroad, or not daring to state all he knew, speaks of this circumstance only in general terms. "They preached," says he, "commented, and taught certain novelties, which, as far as they were known, were considered mere ravings, and reduced those into a book, which they were pleased to style, 'The Everlasting Gospel;' with certain other things, of which it would not be wise to say too much." (*Hist. Ang. ad an.* 1257.) But he has said quite enough to confirm the discoveries subsequently made by writers of every communion, respecting this extraordinary fact, and to make known in what state Dante found the religion of Europe. The inquisitors, in the mean time, were by no means remiss in burning astrologers, and persons accused of practising the art of magic, though it sometimes happened that an astrologer triumphed over them. Of two contemporaries of Dante, one, Cecco d'Ascoli, was burned by order of the Dominican Inquisition at Florence;* and the other, Pietro d'Abano, who was reputed to be confederate with devils, and openly professed astrology, upon being accused at Paris, retorted the charge of heresy upon the Dominicans—summoned them to appear—convicted them of heresy by forty-five special arguments—procured their expulsion and exclusion from Paris for a considerable period—and was himself pronounced innocent by the Pope at Rome.† The people, however, believed in the power

* *Gio. Villani, b. 10.* chap. 39.

† *Michael Savonarola*, ad an. 1292. 1299. Petri Abani conciliator, differentia 10.

; magician. It is mentioned in the chronicles of that age, and still re-
l in the villages of Padua, that Pietro had seven spirits at his command:
nat when he was going to be hanged, he substituted an ass in his place.
act is, that notwithstanding his canonical absolution, Pietro had ad-
l in writings the influence of the stars upon human actions, and de-
absolutely the existence of demons.* The philosophy of Epicurus
nade some progress among the higher orders in the age of Dante; Guido
cauti, his intimate friend, was pointed out by the people for his Medi-
s against the Existence of God.

ns were the grossest abuses of superstition and fanaticism mingled
neretical license, uncertainty of opinion, popular credulity and atheism;
nevertheless, Religion was still the great centre around which all the
ns and interests of mankind revolved. In this singular condition of
y, Boniface, in the last year of the thirteenth century, proclaimed a
y indulgence to all who should make a pilgrimage to Rome. All
endom was accordingly attracted towards the holy city; and, during
l weeks, 200,000 foreigners were calculated to succeed each other
† at its gates. To give all possible solemnity and effect to the
s he proposed to inculcate, Dante fixed the epoch of his Vision of
e Justice in the holy week of that year, when all Europe thus went
to obtain the remission of sins.

e have thus endeavoured to fill up some of the *lacunæ* in the work of
Cancellieri; and trust we have, at the same time, negatived many of
ite and visionary conjectures that have been hazarded upon the sources
ce our poet might have derived the idea of his work. ‡ There are,
ver, some recent authors, whose writings are deservedly popular, of
e opinions it may be right to say something. Denina has gone the
a of supposing, that Dante borrowed his plan from a masquerade which
place during a public festival at Florence, in which devils and
ed souls were represented as characters. This strange drama was
ited on a bridge over the Arno, which, being made of wood, gave
during the show, and closed the scene most tragically. Now, it ap-
from Villani, that Dante had left Florence two years before; and,
ously to his departure, had composed the seven first cantos of his
, which were saved by his wife when his house was pillaged and
oyed by the faction that persecuted him. The manuscript, by
ccio's account, was sent to him in his exile, in 1302; and the masque-
of "The Damned Souls" was represented in 1304. The truth, there-
is probably the very reverse of Denina's conjecture,—that the idea
e show was suggested to the people of Florence by the beginning of
fellow-citizen's poem. Tiraboschi and Mr. Sismondi, indeed, are
of this opinion; and we may add that, even in 1295, Dante, in his
work, entitled "La Vita Nuova," gives distinct hints of the design of
reat poem.

ur poet was the pupil of Brunetto Latini, who, in a sort of poem, en-
l the *Tesoretto*, supposes himself guided by Ovid through the mazes
forest, in search of the oracles of nature and philosophy; and from this

his curious observation was first made by Pico of Mirandola. See *De rerum Prænotatione*.
5.

Muratori, Annali, ad. an. 1300.

Romance of Guerino—Saint Patrick's Pit—The Juggler who goes to Hell—The Dream of
—The Road to Hell—and three Tales of the 12th and 13th Centuries, to be found in the old
ch *Fabliaux*.

model it is confidently asserted, that the pupil loses himself in a forest, and takes Virgil for his guide. That Mr. Corniani should dilate upon this fine discovery, is very natural,—for, of all the historians of Italian literature, he is the most quackish and the most inept. But it is lamentable that it should be repeated with even more confidence by Mr. Ginguené. He is "astonished, that no Italian before Mr. Corniani suspected this to be the origin of Dante's poem;"—and we are astonished, in our turn, that Mr. Ginguené should not know this suspicion to be as old as the year 1400. It may be collected, indeed, from the biographical account of Dante, by Philip Villani, nephew to the illustrious historian of that name; and was advanced more boldly by others a few years after, and at a longer interval.* Federigo Ubaldini says, in the preface to his edition of the Tesoretto in 1642—"Aver Dante imitato il Tesoretto di Brunetto Latini." Mr. Ginguené, too, we may say, has been much too favourable in his judgment of the Tesoretto, which is really a very mean and scarcely intelligible performance. Though written six hundred years ago, we suspect there are but few persons who have read it in all that time. Would it be credited, that Count Mazzuchelli, and Father Quadrio, the two Italian writers who have most carefully explored the old authors, had but an imperfect knowledge of the Tesoretto, even while they were busy disputing about it? Both writers, misled by the resemblance of name, mention it as an abridgment of the *Tesoro*, which is in fact the great work of Brunetto Latini, but has nothing whatever, either in conception or matter, in common with the Tesoretto. The Tesoro, besides, is written in French, and in prose. Monsignor Fontanini, who is occasionally bewildered by his admiration of what is old, calls the Tesoretto—"Poesia christiana, nobile e morale." Its orthodoxy we do not dispute. But, for nobleness, we can see nothing but the reverse. And as to its morality, it consists entirely in a string of maxims, or rather proverbs, without imagery, sentiment, or a single spark of animation. It is, moreover, disfigured by grammatical inaccuracies, vulgarisms of phrase, and a great number of words, so obscure, as not to be found even in the dictionary of La Crusca. That Academy, which was certainly disposed to do full justice to the efforts of the early Florentine writers, and was instituted for the purpose of examining them with more care, has characterised the Tesoretto in three words—"Poesia a foggia di frottola" (poetry in the trivial ballad style).

After all this, we should scarcely have expected to meet with a passage like the following in so learned and correct an author as Mr. Hallam:—"The source from which Dante derived the scheme and general idea of his poem, has been a subject of enquiry in Italy. To his original mind, one might have thought the sixth Æneid would have sufficed. But it happens, in fact, that he took his plan, with more direct imitation than we should expect, from the Tesoretto of his master in philosophical studies, Brunetto Latini. This is proved by Mr. Ginguené, b. ii. p. 8." Even the authority is hastily quoted for this hasty opinion: for though it is true, that, in the place cited by Mr. Hallam, and elsewhere, the French critic has made the assertion here imputed to him, it is very remarkable, that in the succeeding volume, this *certainty* is reduced to *probability*. Mr. Ginguené there says only, "that Dante gave grandeur and poetic colouring to the ideas of his master, Brunetto, *if indeed he borrowed any from him, and similar ideas*

* Vide Lor. Mehus, vita del Traversari, p. 153.

were not dictated to him by the nature of his subject." (Vol. ii. p. 27.) And at last this great discovery dwindles into a mere *possibility*; for Mr. Ginguené, in giving some extracts from the Tesoretto, is reduced to the avowal, "that it is at least *possible* Dante may have profited by it." (P. 8.) The truth is, that such inaccuracies and inconsistencies are almost inevitable in treating of foreign literature; and especially of a literature so copious and peculiar as the Italian. The history of its eminent writers is entangled in the dissensions of the different provinces—the systems of their different schools—their religious opinions, and not infrequently the political interests of their several masters. Hence, in order to appreciate the force or the value of their expressions, it is often necessary to have an accurate knowledge of the different systems of literary education, of manners, of revolutions, of governments, and, often, even of the personal character and design of each writer. In Italy, too, it should be remembered, that there has not for centuries been any political freedom, and that the people have been studiously kept in ignorance. Flattery and satire have accordingly been chiefly in request—while party spirit and imposture have had full play. The number of readers, at the same time, is so limited, as to consist almost wholly of *protégés*, patrons, and rivals; and the men of letters, who might expose imposture and bring truth to light, have rarely been able to speak without danger. We have already observed, that the Jesuits usurped every branch of polite literature; and that, to serve the cause of the Popes, they systematically decried Dante, with the other noblest geniuses of Italy. Nevertheless, the history of the Jesuit Tiraboschi, is (with very few exceptions) the constant model of Mr. Ginguené, who in fact has done little more than impart a more lively colouring to the original design of that learned but prejudiced person. In the execution of this humble task, however, he now and then gets so bewildered as to be unjust to his model:—for example, he actually charges Tiraboschi "with having confounded the Tesoro with the Tesoretto" (vol. ii. p. 8.); while the fact is, that Tiraboschi was the very person who first exposed this blunder of Mazzuchelli and Quadrio, to which we have already adverted. (*Storia Lett.* vol. iv. lib. 3. c. 5.) The French, however, are apt, we suspect, to fall into such perplexities. The Abbé de Sades, in his Memoirs of the Life of Petrarca, relates of that poet—"that, to avoid a winter passage *over the mountains between Milan and Venice*, he postponed his journey," etc. (vol. iii. p. 345.) Now, we shall not venture to say what might have been the state of that country anterior to the deluge; but of this we are certain, that in no author, ancient or modern, always excepting M. de Sades, is there the least mention of mountains between Milan and Venice—a tract of country so flat, as to be called, in the chronicles of the time of Petrarca—"La Valle Lombarda."—The key to the whole is, that the Abbé had never been in Italy,—and that Mr. Ginguené wrote in the same predicament; having never penetrated beyond Turin, where he went as ambassador in the time of the republic. We must not wonder, therefore, if he should now and then make a slip—but he might have avoided quoting foreign as native authority. "Pour ne point alléguer ici," observes Mr. Ginguené (vol. i. p. 25), "d'autorités suspectes; c'est encore dans *les Italiens* que je puiserais:" and incontinently he cites a passage *of Mr. Andres*, who certainly writes in Italian, but is *a Spaniard!*—and, moreover, generally considered in Italy as neither very well acquainted with its literature, nor very just to it.

The work of Mr. Frederick Schlegel, which has been very lately trans-

lated into English, is another instance of the hazards of all peremptory criticism on the character of foreign writers. The German author has entitled his book—*Lectures on the History of Literature ancient and modern.*" He is graciously pleased to represent Dante as "the greatest of Italian and of Christian poets,"—but observes, at the same time, that "*the Ghibeline harshness* appears in Dante in a form noble and dignified. But although it may perhaps do no injury to the outward beauty, it certainly mars, in a very considerable degree, the internal charm of his poetry. His chief defect is, in a word, *the want of gentle feelings.*" Now, the opinion of Mr. Hallam is directly opposite to that of this learned Theban. "In one so highly endowed by nature," observes Mr. Hallam, "and so consummate by instruction, we may well sympathise with a resentment which exile and poverty rendered perpetually fresh. But the heart of Dante was naturally *sensible*, and *even tender*: his poetry is full of comparisons from rural life; and the sincerity of his early passion for Beatrice pierces through the veil of allegory that surrounds her. But the memory of his injuries pursued him into the immensity of eternal light; and, in the company of saints and angels, his unforgiving spirit darkens at the name of Florence." It would be presumption in us to determine—between Mr. Schlegel and Mr. Hallam—which has read Dante with more care; but the poem itself, we think, affords sufficient evidence that the English critic has the truer sense of its character—and is most in unison with the soul of the poet, which was fraught even to redundance with "gentle feelings," and poured them out, on every occasion, with a warmth and delicacy perhaps unequalled in any other writer. We must, however, remind even Mr. Hallam, that Dante does not always, in his poem, mention his country with resentment; and in his prose work, "Il Convito," he remembers Florence with the most affectionate tenderness. He styles the injustice of his fellow-citizens towards himself a fault, not a crime—and offers up a pathetic prayer, "that his bones might repose at last in the soft bosom of that land which had nursed and borne him to the maturity of his age."—We subjoin his own words, for the satisfaction of those who are sufficiently conversant with Italian to feel the beauty of the original, and who will thence readily concur in the truth of our observation:—"Ahi! piaciuto fosse al Dispensatore dell' Universo che la cagione della mia scusa mai non fosse stata! Che nè altri contro me avrai fallato, nè io sofferto avrei pena ingiustamente; pena, dico, d'esilio e di povertà, poichè fu piacere dei cittadini della bellissima e famosissima figlia di Roma, Fiorenza, di giattarmi fuori del suo dolce seno, nel quale nato e nudrito fui fino al colmo della mia vita; e nel quale, con buona pace di quella, desidero con tutto il cuore di riposare l'animo stanco, e terminare il tempo che mi è dato."

Mr. Schlegel, however, is not the only person who has imputed harshness of soul to Dante. This, indeed, is a sort of traditional censure, derived from the fastidious critics of the court of Leo X.; for our poet, it must be confessed, was

> . . . . *minus aptus acutis*
> *Naribus horum hominum* . . . .
> . . . . *at est vir bonus, ut melior*
> *Non alius quisquam, at ingenium ingens.*

It is a distinctive trait in the character of the earlier poets, that they continually reveal to us in their writings the inmost feelings and disposition of their souls. They, as it were, say to the reader—

Tibi nunc, hortante Camænâ,
Executienda damus præcordia.

n order to obtain just views of those characteristic feelings, their should be read through and through; whereas the generality of cri- ntent themselves with a few popular passages, and judge of the rest ing to the response of some of those oracles, who, like Cardinal), have had the art or the good fortune to make their *dicta* pass cur- authority. Dante is, perhaps, the poet most spoken of, and least y foreigners. It may, therefore, be proper to select a few passages he many that might be found in his poem, to prove that his heart much distinguished for gentleness as for magnanimity and force. haughtiness of demeanour, attributed to him by all the writers from ni Villani to the present day, probably is not exaggerated. He was lly proud; and when he compared himself with his contemporaries, his own superiority, and took refuge, as he expresses it himself with ch happiness—

Sotto l'usbergo del sentirsi puro.
Conscience makes me firm;
The boon companion, *who her strong breastplate*
Buckles on him that feels no guilt within,
And bids him on, and fear not.

theless, this inflexibility and pride melt at once into the softest defe- and docility, when he meets those who have claims upon his gratitude spect. In conversing with the shade of Brunetto Latini, who was ed for a shameful crime, he still attends his master with his head bent

Il capo chino
Tenea, com' uom che riverente vada—
Held my head
Bent down as one who walks in reverent guise.

believe it has never been remarked that Dante, who makes it a rule, versing with all others, to employ the pronoun *tu* (thou), uses the un *voi* (you) in addressing his preceptor Brunetto, and his mistress ice. Even Mr. Cary has not seized this shade of distinction, and lates

Siete voi *qui, ser Brunetto—*
—by— Sir! Brunetto!
And art *thou* here?

poet has even carried modesty so far as not to pronounce his own ; and upon one occasion, when he was asked who he was, did not say e was Dante; but whilst he described himself in such a manner as to an exalted opinion of his genius, ascribed all the merit to love. bv h he was inspired—

. . . . Io mi son un, che quando
Amore spira, noto; e a quel modo
Che detta dentro, vo significando.
Count of me but as one
Who am the scribe of Love, that, when he breathes,
Take up my pen, and, as he dictates, write.

when the beloved Beatrice addresses him, as if to reproach him with past life—

Dante!
Non pianger anco, non pianger ancora;
Che pianger ti convien per altra spada—

Dante, weep not;
Weep thou not yet;—behoves thee feel the edge
Of other sword, and thou shalt weep for that;

he writes his own name, lest he should alter or omit a single word that fell from the lips of her he loved; yet, even for this, he thinks it necessary to excuse himself—

Quando mi volsi, al suon del nome mio
Che di necessità qui si rigistra—

Turning me at the sound of mine own name,
Which here I am compelled to register.

This repugnance to occupy his readers with his own particular concerns (a repugnance of which we have certainly no reason to complain in the authors of the present day) has perhaps imposed upon Dante his singular silence respecting his family; whilst he records a variety of domestic anecdotes of almost all his acquaintance, and so forcibly paints the miseries of exile, he omits one grief the most cruel of all—that of a father without a house to shelter, or bread to feed his young and helpless children. It is beyond all doubt that he had several sons, and that they lived in a state of proscription and distress until the period of his death. But, for this fact, we are indebted only to the historians. From his own writings it could not be even suspected that he was a husband and a father.

It is, however, easy to perceive, that he is thinking of his family, when he exclaims, that the women of Florence, in older times, when purity of morals and civil concord prevailed, were not reduced to a life of widowhood whilst their husbands yet lived—or obliged to share with them the sufferings of their exile, without knowing in what place they should find a grave—

O fortunate, e ciascuna era certa
Della sua sepoltura—

Oh! happy they,
Each sure of burial in her native land.

It is not alone in his "comparisons drawn from rural life," as remarked by Mr. Hallam, but principally in what he says of social intercourse, and of the brighter days of his country, that we perceive the sensibility and gentleness of his nature. He delights in painting the joys of domestic life, of which he presents a most affecting picture in the 15th Canto of the Paradiso, whence we have taken the verses just quoted. He does not lament the loss of innocence and simplicity alone, but also of the refined luxury, the courtesy, the chivalrous spirit of gallantry and love, and the tone of high-breeding in society, which in Italy, it seems, were then beginning to disappear.

The ladies and the knights, the toils and ease,
That witched us into love and courtesy.
Le donne, i cavalier', gli affanni e gli agi
Che ne invogliova amore e cortesia.

These two lines have such a charm to Italian ears, that Ariosto, after having sketched a thousand beginnings for his poem, and decided upon an indifferent one enough, which was printed, finally rejected them all in the second edition, and substituted, almost word for word, the verses of Dante, as follows—

Le donne, i cavalier'. l'armi, gli amori
Le cortesie, l'audaci imprese, io canto.

light change which it was necessary to make, destroyed the sweet
of the original; and the delicate sentiment of regret is wholly lost
itation. It is very rarely that the same ideas, or the same words,
the same effect, when transplanted from the place into which they
ped from the heart of a man of genius.
rious to see, how little novelty there is, even in the most modern
egant distresses. Dante, in the beginning of the 14th century,
s, that commerce having suddenly enriched numbers of mere
ociety was corrupted and debased by an upstart aristocracy, whose
and profusion had put to flight all courtesy of heart, and refine-
breeding—

An upstart multitude, and sudden gain,
Pride and excess, oh! Florence! have in thee
Engendered; so that now in tears thou mourn'st.

ne of the many instances in which our poet mingles with stern jus-
servation a sentiment of plaintive tenderness for his country. It
believe, be much more forcibly felt by those who understand the

La gente nuova e i subiti guadagni,
Orgoglio e dismisura han generata,
Fiorenza, in te! si che tu già te piagni.

lso the generosity to attribute to others the courtesy which was
so much nobleness, and expressed with so much sweetness, by
Upon his entrance into Purgatory, he meets his friend Casella,
ted musician, who died a short time before, and whom he deeply

Then one I saw, darting before the rest
With such fond ardour to embrace me, a
To do the like was moved: O, shadows vain,
Except in outward semblance! Thrice my hands
I clasped behind it; they as oft returned
Empty into my breast again: Surprise,
I need must think, was painted in my looks,
For that the shadow smiled and backward drew.
To follow it I hastened, but with voice
Of sweetness, it enjoined me to desist:
Then who it was I knew, and prayed of it
To talk with me it would a little pause:
It answered, "Thee as in my mortal frame
I loved, so loosed from it I love thee still,
And therefore pause; but why walkest thou here?".

l give neither the sequel nor the original of this dialogue. Even
le attempt at translation suffices to show, that it was dictated to a
mind by nature. At the close of their conversation, the poet asks
d to sing.

Then I: "If new laws have not quite destroyed
Memory and use of that sweet song of long,
That whilom all my cares had power to 'suage,
Please thee with it a little to console
My spirit—
" Love that discourses in my thoughts." He then
Began, in such soft accents, that within
The sweetness thrills me yet.

These lines convey but a dim shadow of the grace and tenderness o original.

Ed Io: " Se nuova legge non ti toglie
Memoria o uso all' amoroso canto,
Che mi solea quetar tutte mie voglie;
Di ciò ti piaccia consolare alquanto
L'anima mia—
" Amor che nella mente mi ragiona"—
Cominciò egli allor si dolcemente
Che la dolcezza ancor dentro mi suona.

Dante, in the words "amoroso canto," asks his friend generally to sing some strain that should excite in him feelings of tenderness and love; v in Mr. Cary's translation, the words "*that* song of love," seem rath indicate some particular song, and thereby destroy the beauty and del of the poet's idea; for the touch of courteous and gentle feeling whi imagines in his friend is, that Casella selects a song which Dante had self written for Beatrice. This is not mentioned in the poem; but we found the Canzone, of which the opening is given here, among his compositions.

Perhaps we have not correctly seized the acceptation in which the v "gentle feelings" are used by Mr. F. Schlegel. It is difficult for peo understand each other through the medium of a foreign language. have before us a French translation of the *Inferno*, published a few since in London, in which the translator complains "of not finding en of *episodes* in the poem of Dante, and this radical vice of the poem," he "necessarily fatigues the most intrepid reader." Now, in as much a whole poem, and particularly the *Inferno*, is a tissue of episodes, w obliged to conclude that, in French literature, the word *episode* n something very different from what is generally understood. We l however, too many frightful examples before us, to enter into discus relating to a foreign language. Mr. Ginguené, who has treated Italia terature with more zeal and candour, and who was generally better qua than many who have undertaken the same task, is, we regret to repeat of those examples. The simile of Dante (Inf. Cant. I.)

E come quei che con lena affannata,
Uscito fuor del pelago alla riva,
Si volge all' acqua perigliosa, e guata, :*

is translated by Mr. Ginguené, "*Comme un voyageur hors d'hal descendu sur le rivage, tourne ses regards vers la mer où il a couru ta dangers.*" In the original, the question is not about a traveller at sea about a man who saves himself by swimming. He reaches the shore, having despaired of escape, and when at the very last gasp. The v "fuor del pelago" present the man to our imagination as if he had just vomited up by the ocean; and the concluding verse places him in sort of stupor which is felt upon passing at once to safety from des without any intervention of hope. He looks back upon perdition wi stare, unconscious how he had escaped it. The word "guata" which the stanza and the sentence, presents all this, as if by magic, to the ima tion of the reader, and leaves him in full possession of the image whicl poet had conjured up by his genius.

* And as a man with difficult short breath,
Forespent with toiling, 'scaped from sea to shore,
Turns to the perilous wide waste, and stands
At gaze. *(Cary's translat.)*

observations may appear too minute and particular: but it is in like this that the peculiar merit of Dante consists. He condenses thoughts and feelings in the facts he relates, and expresses himself bly by images, and those images often what the Italian painters *iscorcio*. Even his largest groups are composed of a very few of the pencil, and in none does he ever stop to fill up the design inute or successive touches, but passes hastily on through the ess variety of his subject, without once pausing to heighten the or even to allow its full developement to the emotion he has excited. e word, flung in apparently without design, often gives its whole d character to the picture. Thus, in the third Canto of the Pur-, the poet gazes with fixed eyes upon the shades as they move over untain. One stands still and addresses him.

Then of them one began—"Whoe'er thou art
Who journey'st thus this way, thy visage turn.
Think if me elsewhere thou hast ever seen."
I towards him turn'd, and with fix'd eyes beheld.
Comely and fair and gentle of aspéct
He seem'd; but on one brow a gash was mark'd;
When humbly I disclaim'd to have beheld
Him ever. "Now behold," he said; and show'd,
High on his breast a wound; then smiling, spake,
"I am Manfredi."

E un di loro incominciò, chiunque
Tu se', così andando volgi 'l viso,
Por mente, se di là mi vedesti unque.
Io mi volsi ver lui. e guardail fiso,
Biondo era. e bello, e di gentile aspetto;
Ma l' un de' cigli un colpo avea diviso.
Quando mi fui umilmente disdetto
D'averlo visto mai, el disse: Or vedi;
E mostrommi una piaga a sommo il petto,
Poi sorridendo *disse: Io son Manfredi.*

fredi was the most powerful prince of Italy, and the chief support Ghibeline party; and fell on the field of battle in the flower of his The Pope had his bones dug up and exposed, in order that they be "*washed by the rain, and stirred by the wind.*"* It is easy to e what Dante felt at the sight of this ill-fated and youthful hero. ok to find a eulogy upon him; but the poet, in his own person, not of Manfredi. It is by the single word *sorridendo* that the is moved to admiration and to pity. Dante employs but that one to express the magnanimity of a hero SMILING, whilst he shows ound that arrested him in his career of glory; and discovering, in *ile*, his contempt of the vindictive fury of his enemies.

shall add but one example more, to show the difficulty of explaining uties of Dante's composition by any general description. The pas-e select is from the episode of "*Francesca da Rimini*," as being miliar to the English reader, both from its own popularity, and from autiful amplification of it which Mr. Hunt has lately given to the . *Francesca* says to the poet,

Amor, ch' al cor gentil ratto s'apprende,
Prese costui della bella persona
Che mi fu tolta; e' il modo ancor m' offende:
Amor, ch' a nullo amato amar perdona,
Mi prese del costui piacer si forte

* Or le bagna la pioggia e muove il vento.

Che, come vedi, ancor non m'abban dona:
Amor condusse noi ad una morte.

Love, that in gentle heart is quickly learn'd,
Entangled him by that fair form, from me
Ta'en in such cruel sort, as grieves me still;
Love, that denial takes from none beloved,
Caught me with pleasing him so passing well,
That, as thou see'st, he yet deserts me not;
Love brought us to one death.

The whole history of woman's love is as highly and completely wrou we think, in these few lines, as that of *Juliet* in the whole trage Shakspeare. *Francesca* imputes the passion her brother-in-law ceived for her, not to depravity, but nobleness of heart in him,* a her own loveliness. With a mingled feeling of keen sorrow and c placent *naïveté*, she says she was fair, and that an ignominious death bed him of her beauty. She confesses that she loved, because she beloved:—That charm had deluded her;—and she declares, with tr port, that joy had not abandoned her even in hell:—

———piacer si forte
Che, come vedi, ancor non m'abbandona.

It is thus that Dante unites perspicuity with conciseness—and the naked simplicity with the profoundest observation of the heart. guilty passion survives its punishment by Heaven—but without a s of impiety. How striking is the contrast of her extreme happiness i midst of torments that can never cease; when, resuming her narrative looks at her lover, and repeats with enthusiasm,

Questi, che mai da me non fia diviso—
———he, who ne'er
From me shall separate. †

She nevertheless goes on to relieve her brother-in-law from all imput of having seduced her. Alone, and unconscious of their danger, they a love-story together. They gazed upon each other, pale with emoti but the secret of their mutual passion never escaped their lips.

Per più fiate gli occhi ci sospinse
Quella lettura, è scolorocci 'l viso;
Ma solo un punto fu quel che ci vinse.

Oft-times by that reading
Our eyes were drawn together, and the hue
Fled from our alter'd cheek: But at one point
Alone we fell.

We are sorry to say Mr. Cary has not translated these interesting sages with his usual felicity. The description of two happy lovers i story was the ruin of Francesca. It was the romance of Lancilot Ginevra, wife of Arthur, King of England. ‡

Quando leggemmo il disiato riso
Esser baciato da cotanto amante,
Questi, che mai da me non fia diviso
La bocca mi baciò tutto tremante.

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* The words "*gentile*," and "*gentilezza*," as used by the best writers, from Dante present day, denote rather nobleness of soul than amiableness of manners. *Gentilezza* is a pr city towards all that is beautiful and generous; and is the alliance of delicacy of sentiment high courage. Ariosto says, the lion *ha il cor gentile.*

† We think the word *questi*, in the original, more evidently conveys the idea that Fran when she used it, turned her eyes towards her lover, who was ever by her side.

‡ Dante calls the author "*Galeotto*;" and, in the manuscripts of Boccaccio, his Deca is found entitled "*Il principe Galeotto*," apparently to apprise the reader of its being a dang book.

———When of that smile we read,
The wish'd for smile, so rapturously kiss'd
By one so deep in love; then he, who ne'er
From me shall separate, at once my lips
All trembling kiss'd.

is avowal, she hastens to complete the picture with one touch which ıer with confusion.

Quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante.
———That day,
We read no more!

ɔrs not another word!—and yet we fancy her before us, with her ɜt and glowing looks; whilst her lover stands by her side, listening ɔe and in tears. Dante, too, who had hitherto questioned her, no ventures to enquire in what manner her husband had put her to but is so overcome by pity, that he sinks into a swoon. Nor is ɔe considered as merely a poetical exaggeration. It is remarked by ımentators, that the poet had himself often yielded to the force of nd that the fear of his own damnation probably mingled with his ɜion for Francesca, in producing this excessive emotion. This may —but it is but a part of the truth. Dante's whole work, though l on what may be considered as an extravagant fiction, is conversant ith real persons. While other poets deal with departed or with s heroes, he takes all his characters from among his countrymen, temporaries, his hosts, his relatives, his friends, and his enemies. ɜs he seek to disguise them under borrowed appellations. He gives, ı words, the name and description and character of all those well individuals. He converses with them—reminds them of their former ıip—and still seeks to mingle his sentiments with theirs. At the ime, he marks impartially the retribution to which he thinks their t has entitled them; while, with a singular mixture of human relent- ɜ is not prevented by their crimes, and consequent punishment in om doing them honour—laying open to them his heart, and consoling with his tears. If they had attended to those things, we think the ɜntators might have condescended to mention, that Francesca was ıghter of *Guido da Polenta*, master of Ravenna, Dante's protector ɔst faithful friend. The poet had probably known her when a girl, ng in innocence and beauty under the paternal roof. He must, at ıave often heard the father mention his ill-fated child. He must re have recollected her early happiness, when he beheld the spec- her eternal torment; and this, we think, is the true account of the ıelming sympathy with which her form overpowers him. The ɜ, too, was written by him in the very house in which she was born, which he had himself, during the last ten years of his exile, found a ıt asylum.

ɜaccio has given an account which greatly mitigates the crime of ɜsca; and he insinuates, that still further particulars were known to

He relates, that "*Guido* engaged to give his daughter in marriage ciotto, the eldest son of his enemy the master of Rimini. Lanciotto, as hideously deformed in countenance and figure, foresaw, that if he ted himself in person, he should be rejected by the lady. He there- ɜsolved to marry her by proxy, and sent, as his representative, his ɜr brother Paolo, the handsomest and most accomplished man in all

Italy. Francesca saw Paolo arrive, and imagined she beheld her future husband. That mistake was the commencement of her passion. The friends of Guido addressed him in strong remonstrances and mournful predictions of the dangers to which he exposed a daughter, whose high spirit would never brook to be sacrificed with impunity. But Guido was no longer in a condition to make war; and the necessities of the politician overcame the feelings of the father."*

Dante abstained from employing any of those circumstances, though highly poetical. He knew that pathos, by being expanded over a number of objects, loses of its force. His design was to produce, not tragedies, but single scenes; and Francesca, to justify herself, must have criminated her father, and thus diminished the affecting magnanimity with which her character is studiously endowed by the poet.

To record this stain upon the illustrious family of a benefactor and a friend, may, in our eyes, appear indelicate and ungrateful; especially as it may be supposed, from his placing Francesca in Hell, that he meant to hold her up to execration. An observation which perhaps has not escaped the learned men of Italy, but which they have never expressed, from the dread of provoking the savage bigotry of their priests, explains this point. Dante constantly distinguishes between the *sins* and *merits* of each individual. *Divine Justice*, in his poem, punishes sin whenever it is actually committed; but *human sympathy*, or pity, laments or extenuates the offence, according to the circumstances under which it was committed. The poet dispenses censure and praise according to the general qualities of the persons —the good or evil they had done their country—the glory or the infamy they had left behind them. He, however, carefully abstains from laying down this maxim in words, whilst he invariably acts upon it both in the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*. In the *Paradiso*, there is plainly no room for its operation.

From this principle he has deduced, that those who have done neither good nor evil in their day are the most despicable of beings. They are described as

Questi sciaurati che mai non fur vivi—
These wretches who ne'er lived.

He places them between Hell, the abode of the damned, and Limbo, the abode of the souls of infants and good men ignorant of the Christian faith; and, with singular boldness of opinion as well as style, he says, *God's* justice disdains to punish, and his mercy disdains to pardon, those who were useless in their lives.

Fama di lor nel mondo esser non lassa,
Misericordia e Giustisia li sdegna,
Non ragioniam di lor, ma guarde e passa.
Fame of them the world hath none,
Nor suffers. Mercy and Justice scorn them both.
Speak not of them; but look, and pass them by.

Among those, he has had the boldness to place Saint Celestino, who abdicated the pontificate through weakness, and acquired his titles to canonisation in a hermit's cell. He also finds amongst them the angels that in the war of *Lucifer* against *God* took neither side, and thought only of themselves.

* *Opere del* Boccacio, vol. v. towards the end. Florence edition, 1721.

In those who merited that *God* should weigh their lives against their sins, Dante has generally implanted a strong desire of celebrity. The prospect of being named by the poet, on his return to the living, suspends awhile the sense of their pains. Great souls, though expiating the guilt and shamefulness of the heaviest sins, entreat him to mention his having seen them. This he always promises; and often, for the purpose of engaging them to speak with him more freely, pledges his faith that they shall not be forgotten. The shades of those only who in their lives were sunk in habitual crime and infamy, conceal from him their names. It is in the middle age, between barbarism and refinement, that men most strongly feel this desire of having their names preserved from oblivion. The passions, at that period, have yet lost no portion of their vigour, and are ruled by impulse rather than by calculation. Man has then more difficulties to rouse, and more courage to sustain him; and, rather than be checked in his course, will plunge with *éclat* into any gulf that opens in his way. Of this the age of Dante furnishes examples scarcely credible in an age like ours, in which nothing retains sufficient novelty to make a strong impression, and the objects of pursuit are so multiplied, that no one can excite a commanding interest. It is obvious, however, that the strong passions of less polished times bear men on to great virtues—great crimes—great calamities; and thus form the characters that are most proper for poetry. Dante had only to look round him for characters such as these. He found them already formed for his purpose, without the necessity of a single heightening touch from his own invention. Refinement had not yet produced that sameness of individual physiognomy in the great mass of a nation. Individual originality, now rare, dangerous, ridiculous and often affected, was then common and undisguised. Poetry, in later times, has succeeded in catching its shades for the purposes of fine comedy—as in the *Misanthrope* of Molière; and of pretty satire—as in Pope's *Rape of the Lock*. But all that this species of poetry can do, is to seize that exterior of character which every age and nation decks out after its own fashion; whilst the poetry, whose business is with the human heart, is coeval and co-extensive with human nature. Pope, accordingly, no sooner lighted, in an almost barbarous age, upon a poetical personage, governed both inaction and in writing by feeling alone, than he produced the *Epistle of Eloisa*, and proved that he had genius. Many a woman of that day resembled *Eloisa* in her misfortunes and her love; but they left few, if any, letters behind them. Even those of *Eloisa* have reached us only by their connection with the writings of her lover. At present, the fair sex write much more, and perhaps feel as much less; and accordingly, our later poets, not finding poetical characters at home, are driven to seek for them in Turkey and in Persia;—while the Germans explore the ruins of Teutonic castles—and the Italians prudently confine themselves to the mythology of Greece and Rome. In fine, when nations are in a semi-barbarous state, the passions are their strongest laws: what else they have under the name of law, is yet without consistency or force. The punishment of an injury is left to him who suffered it—and he regards vengeance as a duty. Dante concludes one of his lyric pieces with the following sentiment—

> How fair is the honour reaped from revenge!
> *Che bell' onor s'acquista in far vendetta.*

How strongly does its application to his own poem illustrate the character

of his age! Though terrified, at every step, by the objects which Hell presents to his view, the sentiment of vengeance, as a duty, stops him in his course. His eyes are fixed upon a shade that seems to shun him. Virgil reminds him that they must continue their journey; and asks the reason of his delay. Dante answers, "If you knew the reason, you would allow me to remain longer; for in the pit, on which I fixed my eyes, I thought I beheld one of my kinsmen."—"Truly," rejoins Virgil, "I marked him pointing his finger at you, with a menacing and haughty air."—"Oh! my master," exclaims Dante; "he was killed by an enemy, and his death has not been yet revenged by any of those to whom that insult was given; and therefore he disdained to speak to me!" *

From those considerations, which we have been tempted to expand perhaps more than was necessary, it is, we think, evident, that the episode of Francesca was every way congenial to the principles, the poetry, and the affections of Dante, as well as to the age in which he lived. To satisfy *Divine Justice*, he, in fact, places her in Hell; but introduces her in such a manner, that human frailty must pity her. Nature had given to her character the poetic cast. Her story, he knew, was one that could not be concealed;—and he gave the daughter of his friend the celebrity which popular tradition could not bestow. The husband of Francesca was living and powerful when Dante wrote; but the fearless vengeance of the poet devotes him to infamy; and foretells, that his place, named after Cain, among the fratricides, awaits him in the very centre of Hell. Indeed, the father of Francesca continued to afford protection to Dante, and not only attended his remains to the tomb, but composed and recited a funeral oration over them. His successors, too, defended the poet's sepulchre against the power of *Charles de Valois*, king of Naples, and the Church—when *John XXII.* sent Cardinal *Bernardo di Poggetto* from Avignon to Ravenna, with orders to drag forth the bones of the poet from the repose of the grave, that they might be burned, and their ashes scattered before the wind. This, indeed, is mentioned only by Boccaccio in the life of Dante; and that piece of biography has been generally regarded as a romance. But the fact, we think, is completely verified in the works of *Bartolo*, a celebrated civilian, who was living at the time, and alludes to it very distinctly in treating of the law *de Rejudicandis Reis* (ad cod. l. 1. *cod. de Rejudic.* etc.).

The celebrity of the episode of Francesca, and the little light hitherto thrown upon it, has engaged us in a discussion, the unavoidable length of which is an additional proof that a commentary upon Dante, which should be useful in an historical and poetical view, still remains to be executed. We hasten now to the close of these desultory observations. But few literary men are acquainted with his lyric compositions; and his prose is scarcely ever mentioned. The elegant treatise written by him, to prove that in a nation, divided by so many dialects as Italy, it must be impossible to adopt the dialect of Florence exclusively, was the principal cause of the little value set by the academy of La Crusca and its adherents upon the prose of our poet. For La Crusca always maintained that the language should not be called Italian, or even Tuscan, but Florentine. Nevertheless, the literary language of Italy, though founded upon the Tuscan, is a distinct language, created by the commonwealth of authors, never spoken, but always written; as Dante had seen and foreseen. His own prose is a fine model of forcible

* Hell, canto 29.

and simple style, harmonious without studied cadences, and elegant without the affected graces of Boccaccio and his imitators. We venture upon a short specimen, extracted from the *Convito*, upon the subject to which we have alluded.

" Siccome non si può bene manifestare la bellezza d'una donna, quando li adornamenti dell' azzimare e delle vestimenti la fanno più annumerare che essa medesima. Onde chi vuole bene giudicare d'una donna, guardi quella, quando solo sua naturale bellezza si sta con lei, da tutto accidentale adornamento discompagnata; Siccome sarà questo volgare; nel quale si vedrà l'agevolezza delle sue sillabe, la proprietà delle sue condizione, e le orazioni che di lui si fanno :—ie quali chi bene guarderà, vedrà essere piene di dolcissima e d'amabilissima bellezza.

" A perpetuale infamia e depressione degli malvagi uomini d'Italia che commendano lo volgare altrui e il loro proprio dispregiano, dico, che la loro mossa viene di cinque abominevoli cagioni. La prima, è cecità di discrezione. La seconda, maliziata scusazione. La terza, cupidità di vanagloria. La quarta, argomento d'invidia. La quinta el' ultima, viltà d'animo, cio è pusillanimità. E ciascuna di queste reità ha si gran setta che pochi son quelli che sieno da essi liberi. Della prima si può così ragionare. Siccome la parte sensitiva dell' anima ha i suoi occhi co' quali apprende la differenza delle cose in quanto elle sono di fuori colorate, così la parte razionale ha il suo occhio, col quale apprende la differenza delle cose in quanto sono ad alcun fine ordinate, e questa è la discrezione. E siccome colui che è cieco degli occhi sensibili va sempre secondo che gli altri, così colui che è cieco del lume della discrezione, sempre va nel suo giudizio secondo il grido o diritto o falso. Onde qualunque ora lo guidatore è cieco, conviene che esso e quello anche cieco che a lui s'appoggia vengano a mal fine. Però è scritto ch' il cieco al cieco farà guida e così caderanno amendue nella fossa. Questa guida è stata lungamente contro a nostro volgare per le ragioni che di sotto si ragioneranno. Appresso di questa i ciechi sopra notati, che sono quasi infiniti, con la mano in sula spalla a questi mentitori sono caduti nella fossa della falsa opinione, della quale uscire non sanno. Dell' abito di questa luce discretiva massimamente le popolari persone sono orbate, però che occupate dal principio della loro vita ad alcuno mestiere, dirizzano si l'animo loro a quella persona della necessità che ad altro non intendono. E però che l'abito di virtù, si morale come intellettuale, subitamente avere non si può, ma conviene che per usanza s' acquisti, e elli la loro usanza pongono in alcuna arte, e a discernere l'altre cose non curano, impossibile è a loro discrezione avere. Perchè incontra che molte volte gridano viva la lor morte e muoja la lor vita, pur che alcuno cominci. E questo è pericolosissimo difetto nella loro cecità. Onde Boezio giudica lo popolare gloria vana perche la veda senza discrezione. Questi sono da chiamare pecore e non uomini. Che se una pecora si gettase da una ripa di mille passi, tutte le altre l' anderebbono dietro. E se una pecora per alcuna cagione al passare d'una strada salta, tutte l' altre saltano, eziandio nulla veggendo di saltare. E io ne vidi già molte in un pozzo saltare per una che dentro vi saltò, forse credendo saltare un muro, non ostante ch' il pastore piangendo e gridando con le braccia el col petto dinanzi si parava. La seconda setta contro al nostro volgare si fa per una maliziata scusa. Molti sono che amano più d'essere tenuti maestri, che d'essere; e per fuggire lo contrario ciò è di non essere tenuti, sempre danno colpa alla materia dell' arte apparecchiata, ovvero allo strumento. Siccome il mal fabro biasima il ferro appresentato a lui; e lo mal Cetarista biasima la cetra;—credendo dar la colpa del mal coltello e del mal suonare al ferro e alla cetra, et levarla a sè. Cosi sono alquanti, e non pochi, che vogliono che l'uomo gli tenga dicitori, et per scusarsi del non dire, o dal dire male, accusano e incolpano la materia, ciò è lo volgare proprio, e commendano l'altro, lo quale non è loro richiesto di fabricare. E chi vuole vedere come questo ferro si dee biasimare, guardi che opere ne fanno gli buoni e perfetti artefici, e conoscerà la maliziata scusa di costoro che biasimando lui si credono scusare. Contro questi cotali grida Marco Tullio nel principio d'un suo libro che se chiama libro del Fine de' Beni. Pero che al suo tempo biasimavano lo latino romano, e commendavano la grammatica Greca. E così dico per somiglianti cagioni che questi fanno vile lo parlare Italico; e prezioso quello de' Provenza," &c. &c.

The lyric poetry of Italy was not indeed invented or perfected, though greatly improved, by Dante. It is mentioned by himself in his prose works, that " lyric composition had been introduced above a century before, by Sicilian poets, into Italy; from which time it was gradually cultivated, down to Guido Cavalcanti, who produced some very fine essays—the finest until those of Dante, who in that kind was, in his turn, surpassed by Petrarca. But still the germs of all that is most enchanting in the strains of Laura's lover may be found in the verses which had previously celebrated Beatrice. The following is the opening of the canzone which his friend Casella so courteously sang to him in Purgatory :—

Amor che nella mente mi ragiona
Della mia donna si soavemente,
Move cose di lei meco sovente
Che l'intelletto sovr' esse disvia :

Lo suo parlar si dolcemente suona,
Che l' anima che l'ode e che lo sente
Dice: oh me lassa! ch' io non son possente
Di dir quel che odo della donna mia:

. . . . . .

Perche il nostro pensier non ha valore
Di ritrar tutto ciò che dice amore.

One of his sonnets begins with these four exquisite lines,—to which othing equal can be found in Petrarca in his happiest moments:—

Ne gli occhi porta la mia donna amore
Perche si fa gentil ciò ch' ella mira:
Ognun che passa presso lei, sospira;—
E a chi saluta fa tremar lo core!

Unwearied reading, and profound knowledge of the Italian language, and of the rise and progress of Italian civilisation, are the essential requisites for illustrating the age, the genius, and the works of Dante. It requires active and persevering industry to ransack libraries, and peruse manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, not even yet brought to light. We would further recommend, that the age of Dante should be accurately distinguished from that of Boccaccio and Petrarca. This distinction has never been observed in the literary history of Italy; and the consequence has been, that notions the most different have been confounded with each other. It was about the decline of Dante's life that the political constitution of the Italian republics underwent a total and almost universal change, in consequence of which a new character was suddenly assumed by men, manners, literature, and the church.

It may be observed, that Dante, notwithstanding the number of his biographers, has not yet had an historian. Among the pieces relating to this poet, either unpublished or but little known, which we have had occasion to see, is an interesting letter, which we shall subjoin with the same orthography in which it may be read in the Laurentine library at Florence.*

About the year 1316, the friends of Dante succeeded in obtaining his restoration to his country and his possessions, on condition that he should pay a certain sum of money, and, entering church, there avow himself guilty, and ask pardon of the Republic. The following was his answer on the occasion, to one of his kinsmen, whom he calls "Father," because, perhaps, he was an ecclesiastic; or, more probably, because he was older than the poet:—"From your letter, which I received with due respect and affection, I observe how much you have at heart my restoration to my country. I am bound to you the more gratefully, that an exile rarely finds a friend. But, after mature consideration, I must, by my answer, disappoint the wishes of some little minds; and I confide in the judgment to which your impartiality and prudence will lead you. Your nephew and mine has written to me, what indeed had been mentioned by many other friends, that, by a decree concerning the exiles, I am allowed to return to Florence, provided I pay a certain sum of money, and submit to the humiliation of asking and receiving absolution; wherein, my Father, I see two propositions that are ridiculous and impertinent. I speak of the impertinence of those who mention such conditions to me; for in your letter, dictated by judgment and discretion, there is no such thing. Is such an invitation to return to his country glorious for Dante, after suffering in exile

* Those who wish to see the original, may find it in that library, by the following references. *Pluteum* 29., *Codex* 8., page 123.

lmost fifteen years? Is it thus, then, they would recompense innocence vhich all the world knows, and the labour and fatigue of unremitting study? ?ar from the man who is familiar with philosophy, be the senseless baseness)f a heart of earth, that could do like a little sciolist, and imitate the infamy)f some others, by offering himself up, as it were, in chains. Far from the nan who cries aloud for justice, this compromise, by his money, with his)ersecutors. No, my Father, this is not the way that shall lead me back .o my country. But I shall return with hasty steps, if you or any other :an open to me a way that shall not derogate from the fame and honour of Dante; but if by no such way Florence can be entered, then Florence I shall never enter. What! shall I not every where enjoy the sight of the sun and stars? and may I not seek and contemplate in every corner of the earth under the canopy of heaven consoling and delightful truth, without first rendering myself inglorious, nay infamous, to the people and republic of Florence? Bread, I hope, will not fail me." *

Yet bread often did fail him. Every reader of his works must know by heart the prediction addressed to him by the shade of his ancestor in Paradise. (Parad. Cant. 17.) "Thou shalt prove how salt is the state of the bread of others, and how hard the road is going up and down the stairs of others." But there is another passage in which, with designed obscurity, and a strength of expression and feeling which makes the reader tremble, he discovers an exact portrait of himself in a man who, *stripping his visage of all shame, and trembling in his very vitals, places himself in the public way, and stretches out his hand for charity*.† It was by such sacrifices he preserved his principles, and sustained the magnanimity of his character. ‡

CHAUCER AND SPENSER. §

Though Spenser was much later than Chaucer, his obligations to preceding poets were less. He has in some measure borrowed the plan of his

* In licteris vestris et reverentia debita et affectione receptis, quam repatriatio mea cure sit vobis ex animo. grata mente, ac diligenti animaversione concepi, etenim tanto me districtius obligastis, quanto rarius exules invenire amicos contingit ad illam vero significata respondeo: et si non eatenus qualiter forsam pusillanimitas appeteret aliquorum, ut sub examine vestri consilii ante judicium, affectuose deposco. ecce igitur quod per licteras vestri mei: que nepotis, necnon aliorum quamplurium amicorum significatum est mihi. per ordinamentum nuper factum Florentie super absolutione bannitorum. quod si solvere vellem certam pecunie quantitatem, vellemque mei notam oblationis et absolvi possem et redire; at presens. in quo quidem duo ridenda et male perconciliata sunt. Pater, dico male perconciliata per illos qui tali expresserunt: nam vestre litere decretius et consultius clausulate nihil de talibus continebant estne ista revocatio gloriosa qua d. all. (i. e. DANTES ALLIGHIERIUS) revocatur ad patriam per trilustrium fere perpessus exilium? hecne meruit conscientia manifesta quibuslibet? hec sudor et labor continuatus in studiis? absit a viro philosophie domestico temeraria terreni cordis humilitas, ut more cujusdam cioli et aliorum infamiam quasi inctus ipse se patiatur offerri. absit a viro predicante Justitiam, ut perpessus injuriam inferentibus elut bene merentibus, pecuniam suam solvat. non est hac via redeundi ad patriam, Pater mi, ed si alia per vos, aut deinde per alios invenietur que fame d. (*Dantis*) que onori non deroget, lam non lentis passibus acceptabo. quod si per nullam talem Florentia introitur, nunquam Florenam introibo. quid ni? nonne solis astrorumque specula ubique conspiciam? nonne dulcissimas veritates potero speculari ubique sub celo, ni prius inglorium, imo ignominiosum populo, Florenaeque civitati me reddam? quippe panis non deficiet.

† See Purgat. canto 11., towards the end.

‡ This article, and an Essay on the commentators on Dante, published in No. lviii. of the Edinburgh Review, were written by the late Ugo Foscolo. See his life in the Annual Obituary for 1828.

§ Sismondi's Literature of the South.—Vol. xxiv. p. 58. June, 1815.

poem from Ariosto; but he has engrafted upon it an exuberance of fa and an endless voluptuousness of sentiment, which are not to be foun the Italian writer.—Farther, Spenser is even more of an inventor in subject-matter. There is a richness and variety in his allegorical sonages and fictions, which almost vies with the splendour of the anc mythology. If Ariosto transports us into the regions of romance, Spen poetry is all fairy-land. In Ariosto, we walk upon the ground, in a c pany, gay, fantastic, and adventurous enough; in Spenser, we wand another world among ideal beings. The poet takes and lays us in the of a lovelier nature, by the sound of softer streams, among greener h and fairer valleys. He paints nature, not as we find it, but as we pected to find it; and fulfils the deluding promise of our youth. He w his wand of enchantment,—and at once embodies airy beings, and thr a delicious veil over all actual objects. The two worlds of reality an fiction seem poised on the wings of his imagination. His ideas, ind seem always more distinct than his perceptions. He is the painter of stractions, and describes them with dazzling minuteness. In the Mas Cupid, the god of love " claps on high his coloured winges *twain*;" it is said of Gluttony in the procession of the Passions,—

" In green vine-leaves he was right fitly clad."

At times he becomes picturesque from his intense love of beauty where he compares Prince Arthur's crest to the appearance of the almo tree. The love of beauty, however, and not of truth, is the moving p ciple of his mind; and his delineations are guided by no principle but impulse of an inexhaustible imagination. He luxuriates equally in sc of Eastern magnificence, or the still solitude of a hermit's cell—in the tremes of sensuality or refinement. With all this, he neither make laugh nor weep. The only jest in his poem is an allegory. But he been falsely charged with a want of passion and of strength. He has in an immense degree. He has not indeed the pathos of immediate ac or suffering, which is the dramatic; but he has all the pathos of sentin and romance,—all that belongs to distant objects of terror, and uncert imaginary distress. His strength, in like manner, is not coarse and pable,—but it assumes the character of vastness and sublimity, seen thro the same visionary medium, and blended with all the appalling associat of preternatural agency. We will only refer to the Cave of Mammon, an the description of Celleno in the Cave of Despair. The three first b of the Faery Queen are very superior to the other. It is not fair to c pare Spenser with Shakspeare, in point of interest. A fairer compar would be with Comus. There is only one book of this allegorical which has more interest than Spenser (with scarcely less imaginatic and that is the Pilgrim's Progress. It is not possible for any two wr to be more opposite than Spenser and Chaucer. Spenser delighted in urious enjoyment;—Chaucer in severe activity of mind. Spenser perhaps, the most visionary of all the poets;—Chaucer the most a ma observation and of the world. He appealed directly to the bosoms and siness of men. He dealt only in realities; and, relying throughout on or common tradition, could always produce his vouchers in nature. sentiment is not the voluntary indulgence of the poet's fancy, but is fou on the habitual prejudices and passions of the very characters he introdu His poetry, therefore, is essentially picturesque and dramatic; in thi

chiefly differs from Boccaccio, whose power was that of sentiment. The picturesque and the dramatic in Chaucer are in a great measure the same thing; for he only describes external objects as connected with character, —as the symbols of internal passion. The costume and dress of the Canterbury pilgrims,—of the knight,—the squire,—the gat-toothed wife of Bath, speak for themselves. Again, the description of the equipage and accoutrements of the two Kings of Thrace and Inde, in the Knight's Tale, are as striking and grand as the others are lively and natural. His descriptions of natural scenery are in the same style of excellence;—their beauty consists in their truth and characteristic propriety. They have a local freshness about them, which renders them almost tangible; which gives the very feeling of the air, the coldness or moisture of the ground. In other words, he describes inanimate objects from the effect which they have on the mind of the spectator, and as they have a reference to the interest of the story. One of the finest parts of Chaucer is of this mixed kind. It is in the beginning of the Flower and the Leaf, where he describes the delight of that young beauty, shrouded in her bower, and listening in the morning of the year to the singing of the nightingale, while her joy rises with the rising song, and gushes out afresh at every pause, and is borne along with the full tide of pleasure, and still increases, and repeats, and prolongs itself, and knows no ebb. The coolness of the arbour,—its retirement,—the early time of the day,—the sudden starting up of the birds in the neighbouring bushes, —the eager delight with which they devour and rend the opening buds and flowers, are expressed with a truth and feeling, which make the whole seem like the recollection of an actual scene. Whoever compares this beautiful and simple passage with Rousseau's description of the Elysée in the New Heloïse, will be able to see the difference between good writing and fine writing, or between the actual appearances of nature and the progress of the feelings they excite in us, and a parcel of words, images, and sentiments thrown together without meaning or coherence. We do not say this from any feeling of disrespect to Rousseau, for whom we have a great affection; but his imagination was not that of the poet or the painter. Severity and boldness are the characteristics of the natural style: the artificial is equally servile and ostentatious. Nature, after all, is the soul of art;—and there is a strength in the imagination which reposes immediately on nature, which nothing else can supply. It was this trust in nature, and reliance on his subject, which enabled Chaucer to describe the grief and patience of Griselda,—the faith of Constance,—and the heroic perseverance of the little child, who, going to school through the streets of Jewry,

"Oh, *alma redemptoris mater*, loudly sung,"

and who, after his death, still triumphed in his song. Chaucer has more of this deep, internal, sustained sentiment than any other writer, except Boccaccio, to whom Chaucer owed much, though he did not owe all to him: for he writes just as well where he did not borrow from that quarter, as where he did; as in the characters of the Pilgrims,—the Wife of Bath's Prologue,—the Squire's Tale, and in innumerable others. The poetry of Chaucer has a religious sanctity about it, connected with the manners of the age. It has all the spirit of martyrdom!

In looking back to the *chefs-d'œuvre* of former times, we are sometimes disposed to wonder at the little progress which has been made since in poetry and the arts of imitation in general. But this, perhaps, is a foolish

wonder. Nothing is more contrary to fact than the supposition, that in what we understand by the fine arts, as painting and poetry, relative perfection is the result of repeated success; and that what has been once well done, constantly leads to something better. What is mechanical, reducible to rule, or capable of demonstration, is indeed progressive, and admits of gradual improvement; but that which is not mechanical or definite, but depends on taste, genius, and feeling, very soon becomes stationary or retrograde, after a certain period, and loses more than it gains by transfusion. The contrary opinion is indeed a common error, which has grown up, like many others, from transferring an analogy of one kind to something quite different, without thinking of the difference in the nature of the things, or attending to the difference of the results. For most persons, finding what wonderful advances have been made in biblical criticism, in chemistry, in mechanics, in geometry, astronomy, etc., *i.e.* in things depending on enquiry and experiment, or on absolute demonstration, have been led hastily to conclude, that there was a general tendency in the efforts of the human intellect to improve by repetition, and in all arts and institutions, to grow perfect and mature by time. We look back upon the theological creed of our ancestors, and their discoveries in natural philosophy, with a smile of pity. Science, and the arts connected with it, have all had their infancy, their youth and manhood, and seem to have in them no principle of limitation or decay; and, enquiring no farther, we infer, in the intoxication of our pride, and the height of our self-congratulation, that the same progress has been made, and will continue to be made, in all other things which are the work of man. The fact, however, stares us so plainly in the face, that one would think the smallest reflection must suggest the truth, and overturn our sanguine theories. The greatest poets, the ablest orators, the best painters, and the finest sculptors that the world ever saw, appeared soon after the first birth of these arts, and lived in a state of society which was in other respects rude and barbarous. Those arts which depend on individual genius and incommunicable power, have almost always leaped at once from infancy to manhood,—from the first rude dawn of invention to their meridian height and dazzling lustre, and have, in general, declined ever after. This is the peculiar distinction and privilege of science and of art;—of the one, never to arrive at the summit of perfection at all; and of the other, to arrive at it almost at once. Homer, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, Dante, and Ariosto, (Milton alone was of a later period, and not the worse for it,)—Raphael, Titian, Michael Angelo, Correggio, Cervantes, and Boccaccio—all lived near the beginning of their arts—perfected, and all but created them. These giant sons of genius stand indeed upon the earth; but they tower above their fellows: and the long line of their successors does not interpose any object to obstruct their view, or lessen their brightness. In strength and stature, they are unrivalled; in grace and beauty, they have never been surpassed. In after-ages and more refined periods (as they are called), great men have arisen one by one, as it were by throes and at intervals; though, in general, the best of these cultivated and artificial minds were of an inferior order; as Tasso and Pope among poets, Guido and Poussin among painters. But in the earlier stages of the arts, when the first mechanical difficulties had been got over, and the language acquired, they rose by clusters and in constellations—never so to rise again.

The arts of poetry and painting are conversant with the world of thought

within us, and with the world of sense without us—with what we know and see and feel intimately. They flow from the living shrine of our own breasts, and are kindled at the living lamp of Nature: but the pulse of the passions assuredly beat as high—the depths and soundings of the human heart were as well understood, three thousand or three hundred years ago, as they are at present. The face of nature, and "the human face divine," shone as bright then, as they have ever done since. But it is their light, reflected by true genius on art, which marks out the path before it, and sheds a glory round the Muses' feet, like that which

——"circled Una's angel face,'
And made a sunshine in the shady place."

ARIOSTO AND TASSO.*

Ariosto's excellence is infinite grace and gaiety. He has fine animal spirits, an heroic disposition, sensibility mixed with vivacity, an eye for nature, great rapidity of narration and facility of style, and, above all, a genius buoyant, and with wings like the Griffin-horse of Rogero, which he turns and winds at pleasure. He never labours under his subject; never pauses; but is always setting out on fresh exploits. Indeed, his excessive desire not to overdo any thing, has led him to resort to the unnecessary expedient of constantly breaking off in the middle of his story, and going on to something else. His work is in this respect worse than Tristram Shandy; for there the progress of the narrative is interrupted by some incident, in a dramatic or humorous shape; but here the whole fault lies with the author. The Orlando Furioso is a tissue of these separate stories, crossing and jostling one another, and is therefore very inferior, in the general construction of the plot, to the Jerusalem Delivered. But the incidents in Ariosto are more lively, the characters more real, the language purer, the colouring more natural; even the sentiments show at least as much feeling, with less appearance of affectation. There is less effort, less display, a less imposing use made of the common ornaments of style and artifices of composition. Tasso was the more accomplished writer, Ariosto the greater genius. There is nothing in Tasso which is not to be found, in the same or a higher degree, in others: Ariosto's merits were his own. The perusal of the one leaves a peculiar and very high relish behind it; there is a vapidness in the other, which palls at the time, and goes off sooner afterwards. Tasso, indeed, sets before us a dessert of melons, mingled with roses:—but it is not the first time of its being served up:—the flowers are rather faded, and the fruit has lost its freshness. Ariosto writes on as it happens, from the interest of his subject, or the impulse of his own mind. He is intent only on the adventure he has in his hand,—the circumstances which might be supposed to attend it, the feelings which would naturally arise out of it. He attaches himself to his characters for their own sakes; and relates their achievements for the mere pleasure he has in telling them. This method is certainly liable to great disadvantages; but we on the whole prefer it to the obtrusive articles of style shown in the Jerusalem,—where the author

* Sismondi's Literature of the South.—Vol. xxiv. p. 55. June, 1815.

seems never to introduce any character but as a foil to some other,—one situation a contrast to the preceding, and his whole poem a cor antithesis in style, action, sentiment, and imagery. A fierce is opp a tender, a blasphemous to a pious character. A lover kills his mist disguise, and a husband and wife are represented defending their liv pretty ambiguity of situation and sentiment, warding off the blows are aimed, not at their own breasts, but at each other's. The same violent effect sometimes produces grossness of character, as in Armid is tricked out with all the ostentatious trappings of a prostitute. Ta more of what is usually called poetry than Ariosto—that is, more and ornaments, and a more splendid and elaborate diction. The l deficient in all these:—the figures and comparisons he introduces elevate or adorn that which they are brought to illustrate: they are, most part, mere parallel cases; and his direct description, simp striking as it uniformly is, seems to us of a far higher order of mer the ingenious allusions of his rival. We cannot, however, agre M. Sismondi, that there is a want of sentiment in Ariosto, or that he only as a painter of objects, or a narrator of events. The instance he gives from the story of Isabella, is an exception to his general The episodes of Herminia, and of Tancred and Clorinda, in Tasso, quisitely beautiful; but they do not come up, in romantic interest passion, to the loves of Angelica and Medoro. We might instance same purpose, the character of Bradamante;—the spirited apostr knighthood, "Oh ancient knights of true and noble heart;"—Orlando, Sacripant, and the other lovers of Angelica—or the triu Medoro;—the whole progress of Orlando's passion, and the still m pressive description of his sudden recovery from his fatal infatuatio the restoration of his senses. Perhaps the finest thing in Tasso is mous description of Carthage, as the warriors pass by it in the en bark. "Giace l'alta Cartago," etc. This passage, however, belon perly to the class of lofty philosophical eloquence; it owes its impr ness to the grandeur of the general ideas, and not to the force of ind feeling or immediate passion. The speech of Satan to his compan said to have suggested the tone of Milton's character of the Devil. see nothing in common in the fiend of the two poets. Tasso descril as a mere deformed monster. Milton was the first poet who had th nanimity to paint the devil without horns and a tail; to give him p beauty and intellectual grandeur, with only moral deformity.

DRYDEN.*

The public voice has assigned to Dryden the first place in the rank of our poets,—no mean station in a table of intellectual prec so rich in illustrious names. It is allowed that, even of the few wh his superiors in genius, none has exercised a more extensive or per influence on the national habits of thought and expression. His commensurate with the period during which a great revolution

* *The Poetical Works of John Dryden.*—Vol. xlvii. p. 21. January, 1828.

ic taste was effected; and in that revolution he played the part of
nwell. By unscrupulously taking the lead in its wildest excesses, he
ined the absolute guidance of it. By trampling on laws, he acquired
uthority of a legislator. By signalising himself as the most daring and
rerent of rebels, he raised himself to the dignity of a recognised prince.
ommenced his career by the most frantic outrages. He terminated it
he repose of established sovereignty,—the author of a new code, the
of a new dynasty.

midst the crowd of authors who, during the earlier years of Charles
Second, courted notoriety by every species of absurdity and affec-
n, he speedily became conspicuous. No man exercised so much
ence on the age. The reason is obvious. On no man did the age
ise so much influence. He was, perhaps, the greatest of those whom
ave designated as the critical poets; and his literary career exhibited,
reduced scale, the whole history of the school to which he belonged,
e rudeness and extravagance of its infancy, — the propriety, — the
, — the dignified good sense, — the temperate splendour of its
ity. His imagination was torpid, till it was awakened by his judg-
He began with quaint parallels, and empty mouthing. He gra-
acquired the energy of the satirist, the gravity of the moralist, the
e of the lyric poet. The revolution through which English litera-
us been passing, from the time of Cowley to that of Scott, may be
miniature within the compass of his volumes.

ife divides itself into two parts. There is some debateable ground
common frontier; but the line may be drawn with tolerable
y. The year 1678 is that on which we should be inclined to fix
date of a great change in his manner. During the preceding
appeared some of his courtly panegyrics, — his Annus Mirabilis,
st of his plays; indeed, all his rhyming tragedies. To the subse-
eriod belong his best dramas,—All for Love, The Spanish Friar,
astian,—his satires, his translations, his didactic poems, his fables,
odes.

e small pieces which were presented to chancellors and princes,
d scarcely be fair to speak. The greatest advantage which the
ts derive from the extension of knowledge is, that the patronage
iduals becomes unnecessary. Some writers still affect to regret
of patronage. None but bad writers have reason to regret it. It
s an age of general ignorance. Where ten thousand readers are
r the appearance of a book, a small contribution from each makes
endid remuneration for the author. Where literature is a luxury,
to few, each of them must pay high. If the Empress Catherine,
nple, wanted an epic poem, she must have wholly supported the
ust as, in a remote country village, a man who wants a mutton chop
imes forced to take the whole sheep; a thing which never happens
he demand is large. But men who pay largely for the gratification
taste, will expect to have it united with some gratification to their
Flattery is carried to a shameless extent; and the habit of flattery
nevitably introduces a false taste into composition. Its language is
of hyperbolical common-places,—offensive from their triteness,
nore offensive from their extravagance. In no school is the trick
tepping the modesty of nature so speedily acquired. The writer,
ned to find exaggeration acceptable and necessary on one subject,

uses it on all. It is not strange, therefore, that the early panegyrical v of Dryden should be made up of meanness and bombast. They ab with the conceits which his immediate predecessors had brought int shion. But his language and his versification were already far superi theirs.

The Annus Mirabilis shows great command of expression, and a fin for heroic rhyme. Here its merits end. Not only has it no claim t called poetry, but it seems to be the work of a man who could never any possibility, write poetry. Its affected similies are the best part o Gaudy weeds present a more encouraging spectacle than utter barrenn There is scarcely a single stanza in this long work to which the imagina seems to have contributed any thing. It is produced, not by creation, by construction. It is made up, not of pictures, but of inferences. will give a single instance, and certainly a favourable instance,—a quat which Johnson has praised. Dryden is describing the sea-fight with Dutch :—

> " Amidst whole heaps of spices lights a ball;
> And now their odours arm'd against them fly.
> S..me preciously by shatter'd porcelain fall,
> And some by aromatic splinters die."

The poet should place his readers, as nearly as possible, in the situatio the sufferers or the spectators. His narration ought to produce feel similar to those which would be excited by the event itself. Is this the here? Who, in a sea-fight, ever thought of the price of the china w beats out the brains of a sailor; or of the odour of the splinter which s ters his leg? It is not by an act of the imagination, at once calling up scene before the interior eye, but by painful meditation,—by turning subject round and round,—by tracing out facts into remote consequen that these incongruous topics are introduced into the description. Hor it is true, perpetually uses epithets which are not peculiarly appropr Achilles is the swift-footed, when he is sitting still. Ulysses is the m enduring, when he has nothing to endure. Every spear casts a long shad every ox has crooked horns; and every woman a high bosom, though these ticulars may be quite beside the purpose. In our old ballads a similar pra prevails. The gold is always red, and the ladies always gay, though thing whatever may depend on the hue of the gold, or the temper of the la But these adjectives are mere customary additions. They merge in substantives to which they are attached. If they at all colour the idea, with a tinge so slight as in no respect to alter the general effect. In passage which we have quoted from Dryden the case is very differe *Preciously* and *aromatic* divert our whole attention to themselves, and solve the image of the battle in a moment. The whole poem reminds of Lucan, and of the worst parts of Lucan,—the sea-fight in the Bay Marseilles, for example. The description of the two fleets during the ni is perhaps the only passage which ought to be exempted from this censu If it was from the Annus Mirabilis that Milton formed his opinion, when pronounced Dryden a good rhymer, but no poet, he certainly judged c rectly. But Dryden was, as we have said, one of those writers in wh the period of imagination does not precede, but follow, the period of o servation and reflection.

His plays, his rhyming plays in particular, are admirable subjects *those who* wish to study the morbid anatomy of the drama. He

rly destitute of the power of exhibiting real human beings. Even in far inferior talent, of composing characters out of those elements into ch the imperfect process of our reason can resolve them, he was very cient. His men are not even good personifications; they are not well- rted assemblages of qualities. Now and then, indeed, he seizes a very rse and marked distinction; and gives us, not a likeness, but a strong icature, in which a single peculiarity is protruded, and every thing neglected; like the Marquess of Granby at an inn door, whom we w by nothing but his baldness; or Wilkes, who is Wilkes only in his int. These are the best specimens of his skill. For most of his tures seem, like Turkey carpets, to have been expressly designed not to emble any thing in the heavens above, in the earth beneath, or in the ters under the earth.

The latter manner he practises most frequently in his tragedies, the ner in his comedies. The comic characters are without mixture, lsome and despicable. The men of Etherege and Vanbrugh are bad ugh. Those of Smollett are perhaps worse. But they do not approach the Celadons, the Wildbloods, the Woodalls, and the Rhodophils of den. The vices of these last are set off by a certain fierce hard im- lence, to which we know nothing comparable. Their love is the ap- te of beasts; their friendship the confederacy of knaves. The ladies m to have been expressly created to form helps meet for such gentle- n. In deceiving and insulting their old fathers, they do not perhaps eed the licence which, by immemorial prescription, has been allowed eroines. But they also cheat at cards, rob strong-boxes, put up their urs to auction, betray their friends, abuse their rivals in the style of ingsgate, and invite their lovers in the language of the Piazza. These, must be remembered, are not the valets and waiting-women, the scarilles and Nerines, but the recognised heroes and heroines, who ap- r as the representatives of good society, and who, at the end of the fifth marry and live very happily ever after. The sensuality, baseness, and lice of their natures, is unredeemed by any quality of a different de- ption,—by any touch of kindness,—or even by any honest burst of rty hatred and revenge. We are in a world where there is no humanity, veracity, no sense of shame,—a world for which any good-natured would gladly take in exchange the society of Milton's devils. But oon as we enter the regions of Tragedy, we find a great change. There no lack of fine sentiment there. Metastasio is surpassed in his own artment. Scuderi is out-scuderied. We are introduced to people ose proceedings we can trace to no motive,—of whose feelings we can n no more idea than of a sixth sense. We have left a race of creatures, ose love is as delicate and affectionate as the passion which an alderman s for a turtle. We find ourselves among beings, whose love is a purely nterested emotion,—a loyalty extending to passive obedience,—a gion, like that of the Quietists, unsupported by any sanction of hope fear. We see nothing but despotism without power, and sacrifices hout compensation.

We will give a few instances:—In Aurengzebe, Arimant, governor of ra, falls in love with his prisoner Indamora. She rejects his suit with rn; but assures him that she shall make great use of her power over n. He threatens to be angry.—She answers, very coolly:—

" Do not: your anger, like your love, is vain:
Whene'er I please, you must be pleased again.
Knowing what power I have your will to bend,
I'll use it; for I need just such a friend.

This is no idle menace. She soon brings a letter, addressed to hi
—orders him to read it,—asks him whether he thinks it sufficiently
—and finally commands him to carry it himself. Such tyranny as
may be thought, would justify resistance. Arimant does indeed ven
remonstrate:—

" This fatal paper rather let me tear,
Than, like Bellerophon, my sentence bear."

The answer of the lady is incomparable:—

" You may; but 'twill not be your best advice;
'Twill only give me pains of writing twice.
You know you must obey me, soon or late.
Why should you vainly struggle with your fate?"

Poor Arimant seems to be of the same opinion. He mutters som
about fate and free-will, and walks off with the billet-doux.

In the Indian Emperor, Montezuma presents Almeria with a g
as a token of his love, and offers to make her his queen. She replie

" I take this garland, not as given by you;
But as my merit's and my beauty's due;
As for the crown which you, my slave, possess,
To share it with you would but make me less."

In return for such proofs of tenderness as these, her admirer cons
murder his two sons, and a benefactor, to whom he feels the w
gratitude. Lyndaraxa, in the Conquest of Granada, assumes the
lofty tone with Abdelmelech. He complains that she smiles upon hi

" *Lynd.* And when did I my power so far resign,
That you should regulate each look of mine?
Abdel. Then, when you gave your love, you gave that power.
Lynd. 'Twas during pleasure—'tis revoked this hour.
Abdel. I'll hate you, and this visit is my last.
Lynd. Do, if you can; you know I hold you fast."

That these passages violate all historical propriety; that senti
to which nothing similar was ever even affected except by the ca
of Europe, are transferred to Mexico and Agra, is a light accu
We have no objection to a conventional world, an Illyrian puritar
Bohemian seaport. While the faces are good, we care little ab
back-ground. Sir Joshua Reynolds says, that the curtains and ha
in a historical painting ought to be, not velvet or cotton, but merely
ery. The same principle should be applied to poetry and romance.
truth of character is the first object; the truth of place and time i
considered only in the second place. Puff himself could tell the a
turn out his toes, and remind him that Keeper Hatton was a great d
We wish that, in our own time, a writer of a very different orde
Puff had not too often forgotten human nature in the niceties of upho
millinery, and cookery.

We blame Dryden, not because the persons of his dramas are not
or Americans, but because they are not men and women;—not b
love, such as he represents it, could not exist in a harem or in a wig

because it could not exist anywhere. As is the love of his heroes, such ll their other emotions. All their qualities, their courage, their gene– y, their pride, are on the same colossal scale. Justice and prudence virtues which can exist only in a moderate degree, and which change r nature and their name if pushed to excess. Of justice and prudence, efore, Dryden leaves his favourites destitute. He did not care to them what he could not give without measure. The tyrants and ians are merely the heroes altered by a few touches, similar to those ch transformed the honest face of Roger de Coverley into the Sara– s head. Through the grin and frown, the original features are still ceptible.

t is in the tragi–comedies that these absurdities strike us most. The races of men, or rather the angels and the baboons, are there presented us together. We meet in one scene with nothing but gross, selfish, blushing, lying libertines of both sexes, who, as a punishment, we suppose, their depravity, are condemned to talk nothing but prose. But as soon we meet with people who speak in verse, we know that we are in society ich would have enraptured the Cathos and Madelon of Molière, in iety for which Oroondates would have too little of the lover, and Clelia much of the coquette.

As Dryden was unable to render his plays interesting by means of that hich is the peculiar and appropriate excellence of the drama, it was cessary that he should find some substitute for it. In his comedies he pplied its place, sometimes by wit, but more frequently by intrigue, by sguises, mistakes of persons, dialogues at cross purposes, hair-breadth capes, perplexing concealments, and surprising disclosures. He thus ceeded at least in making these pieces very amusing.

In his tragedies he trusted, and not altogether without reason, to his iction and his versification. It was on this account, in all probability, that e so eagerly adopted, and so reluctantly abandoned, the practice of rhyming a his plays. What is unnatural appears less unnatural in that species of erse, than in lines which approach more nearly to common conversation; nd in the management of the heroic couplet, Dryden has never been qualled. It is unnecessary to urge any arguments against a fashion now niversally condemned. But it is worthy of observation, that though Dryden as deficient in that talent which blank verse exhibits to the greatest dvantage, and was certainly the best writer of heroic rhyme in our lan– guage, yet the plays which have, from the time of their first appearance, een considered as his best, are in blank verse. No experiment can be more decisive.

It must be allowed that the worst even of the rhyming tragedies con– ains good description and magnificent rhetoric. But even when we forget hat they are plays, and, passing by their dramatic improprieties, consider hem with reference to the language, we are perpetually disgusted by pas– ages which it is difficult to conceive how any author could have written, r any audience have tolerated, rants in which the raving violence of the anner forms a strange contrast with the abject tameness of the thought. e author laid the whole fault on the audience, and declared, that when wrote them, he considered them bad enough to please. This defence is worthy of a man of genius, and, after all, is no defence. Otway pleased hout rant; and so might Dryden have done, if he had possessed the *owers of Otway. The fact is*, that he had a tendency to bombast, which,

though subsequently corrected by time and thought, was never whol removed, and which showed itself in performances not designed to plea the rude mob of the theatre.

Some indulgent critics have represented this failing as an indication genius, as the profusion of unlimited wealth, the wantonness of exubera vigour. To us it seems to bear a nearer affinity to the tawdriness of poverl or the spasms and convulsions of weakness. Dryden surely had not mo imagination than Homer, Dante, or Milton, who never fall into this vic The swelling diction of Æschylus and Isaiah resembles that of Almanz and Maximin no more than the turnidity of a muscle resembles the turnidi of a boil. The former is symptomatic of health and strength, the latter debility and disease. If ever Shakspeare rants, it is not when his imagina tion is hurrying him along, but when he is hurrying his imagination alon —when his mind is for a moment jaded,—when, as was said of Euripide he resembles a lion, who excites his own fury by lashing himself with h tail. What happened to Shakspeare from the occasional suspension of h powers, happened to Dryden from constant impotence. He, like his co federate Lee, had judgment enough to appreciate the great poets of t preceding age, but not judgment enough to shun competition with ther He felt and admired their wild and daring sublimity. That it belonged another age than that in which he lived, and required other talents tha those which he possessed; that, in aspiring to emulate it, he was wastin in a hopeless attempt, powers which might render him preeminent in different career, was a lesson which he did not learn till late. As thos knavish enthusiasts, the French prophets, courted inspiration, by mi- micking the writhings, swoonings, and gaspings, which they considered a its symptoms, he attempted, by affected fits of poetical fury, to bring on t real paroxysm; and, like them, he got nothing but his distortions for hi pains.

Horace very happily compares those who, in his time, imitated Pinda to the youth who attempted to fly to heaven on waxen wings, and who ex perienced so fatal and ignominious a fall. His own admirable good sens preserved him from this error, and taught him to cultivate a style in whic excellence was within his reach. Dryden had not the same self-knowledge He saw that the greatest poets were never so successful as when the rushed beyond the ordinary bounds, and that some inexplicable good for tune preserved them from tripping even when they staggered on the brin of nonsense. He did not perceive that they were guided and sustained by power denied to himself. They wrote from the dictation of the imagination and they found a response in the imaginations of others. He, on the con trary, sat down to work himself, by reflection and argument, into a deli berate wildness, a rational frenzy.

In looking over the admirable designs which accompany the Faust, w have always been much struck by one which represents the wizard an the tempter riding at full speed. The demon sits on his furious horse a heedlessly as if he were reposing on a chair. That he should keep hi saddle in such a posture, would seem impossible to any who did not kno that he was secure in the privileges of a superhuman nature. The attitud of Faust, on the contrary, is the perfection of horsemanship. Poets of th first order might safely write as desperately as Mephistophiles rode. B Dryden, though admitted to communion with higher spirits, though arme th a portion of their power, and intrusted with some of their secrets, w

her race. What they might securely venture to do, it was madness to attempt. It was necessary that taste and critical science should his deficiencies.

will give a few examples. Nothing can be finer than the description tor at the Grecian wall :—

ὁ δ' ἄρ' ἔσθορε φαίδιμος Ἕκτωρ,
Νυκτὶ θοῇ ἀτάλαντος ὑπώπια· λάμπε δὲ χαλκῷ
Σμερδαλέῳ, τὸν ἕεστο περὶ χροΐ· δοιὰ δὲ χερσὶ
Δοῦρ' ἔχεν· οὐκ ἄν τις μιν ἐρυκάκοι ἀντιβολήσας,
Νόσφι θεῶν, ὅτ' ἐσᾶλτο πύλας· πυρὶ δ' ὄσσε δεδήει·—
Αὐτίκα δ' οἱ μὲν τεῖχος ὑπέρβασαν, οἱ δὲ κατ' αὐτὰς
Ποιητὰς ἐσέχυντο πύλας· Λαναοὶ δ' ἐφόβηθεν
Νῆας ἀνὰ γλαφυράς· ὅμαδος δ' ἀλίαστος ἐτύχθη.

at daring expressions! Yet how significant! How picturesque! r seems to rise up in his strength and fury. The gloom of night in own,—the fire burning in his eyes,—the javelins and the blazing r,—the mighty rush through the gates and down the battlements, trampling and the infinite roar of the multitude, every thing is with every thing is real.

'den has described a very similar event in Maximin; and has done his be sublime, as follows :—

" There with a forest of their darts he strove,
And stood like Capaneus defying Jove;
With his broad sword the boldest beating down,
Till Fate grew pale, lest he should win the town,
And turn'd the iron leaves of its dark book
To make new dooms, or mend what it mistook."

exquisite is the imagery of the fairy-songs in the Tempest and the mmer Night's Dream; Ariel riding through the twilight on the bat, ing in the bells of flowers with the bee; or the little bower-women nia, driving the spiders from the couch of the queen! Dryden truly at

" Shakspeare's magic could not copied be;
Within that circle none durst walk but he."

ld have been well if he had not himself dared to step within the en- l line, and drawn on himself a fate similar to that which, according old superstition, punished such presumptuous interference. The ng lines are parts of the song of his fairies :—

" Merry, merry, merry, we sail from the East,
Half-tippled at a rainbow feast.
In the bright moonshine, while winds whistle loud,
Tivy, tivy, tivy, we mount and we fly.
All racking along in a downy white cloud;
And lest our leap from the sky prove too far,
We slide on the back of a new-falling star,
And drop from above
In a jelly of love."

are very favourable instances. Those who wish for a bad one may ne dying speeches of Maximin, and may compare them with the last of Othello and Lear.

Dryden had died before the expiration of the first of the periods into we have divided his literary life, he would have left a reputation, at little higher than that of Lee or Davenant. He would have been n only to men of letters; and by them he would have been mentioned

as a writer who threw away, on subjects which he was incompete treat, powers which, judiciously employed, might have raised hi eminence; whose diction and whose numbers had sometimes very merit, but all whose works were blemished by a false taste, and by e of gross negligence. A few of his prologues and epilogues might pe still have been remembered and quoted. In these little pieces, he showed all the powers which afterwards rendered him the great modern satirists. But during the latter part of his life, he gradually doned the drama. His plays appeared at longer intervals. He reno rhyme in tragedy. His language became less turgid—his character exaggerated. He did not indeed produce correct representations of h nature; but he ceased to daub such monstrous chimeras as those v abound in his earlier pieces. Here and there passages occur worthy best ages of the British stage. The style which the drama requires, cha with every change of character and situation. He who can vary manner to suit the variation, is the great dramatist; but he who exce one manner only will, when that manner happens to be appropriate, ap to be a great dramatist; as the hands of a watch, which does not go, right once in the twelve hours. Sometimes there is a scene of solemn de This a mere rhetorician may write as well as the greatest tragedian that lived. We confess that to us the speech of Sempronius in Cato seems nearly as good as Shakspeare could have made it. But when the s breaks up, and we find that the lovers and their mistresses, the hero villain, and the deputy-villain, all continue to harangue in the same we perceive the difference between a man who can write a play and a who can write a speech. In the same manner, wit, a talent for descri or a talent for narration, may, for a time, pass for dramatic genius. D was an incomparable reasoner in verse. He was conscious of his p he was proud of it; and the authors of the Rehearsal justly charge with abusing it. His warriors and princesses are fond of discussing of amorous casuistry, such as would have delighted a parliament of They frequently go still deeper, and speculate on philosophical nec and the origin of evil.

There were, however, some occasions which absolutely require peculiar talent. Then Dryden was indeed at home. All his best are of this description. They are all between men; for the heroes of Dr like many other gentlemen, can never talk sense when ladies are in com They are all intended to exhibit the empire of reason over violent pa We have two interlocutors; the one eager and impassioned, the other cool, and judicious. The composed and rational character gradually ac the ascendency. His fierce companion is first inflamed to rage b reproches, then overawed by his equanimity, convinced by his argun and soothed by his persuasions. This is the case in the scene between H and Troilus, in that between Antony and Ventidius, and in that betwee bastian and Dorax. Nothing of the same kind in Shakspeare is equal to t except the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius, which is worth them all t

Some years before his death, Dryden altogether ceased to write fo stage. He had turned his powers in a new direction, with success the splendid and decisive. His taste had gradually awakened his creativ culties. The first rank in poetry was beyond his reach, but he challe and secured the most honourable place in the second. His imaginatio sembled the wings of an ostrich. It enabled him to run, though not to

When he attempted the highest flights, he became ridiculous; but while he remained in a lower region, he outstripped all competitors.

All his natural, and all his acquired powers, fitted him to found a good critical school of poetry. Indeed he carried his reforms too far for his age. After his death, our literature retrograded; and a century was necessary to bring it back to the point of which he left it. The general soundness and healthfulness of his mental constitution, his information of vast superficies, though of small volume, his wit scarcely inferior to that of the most distinguished followers of Donne, his eloquence, grave, deliberate, and commanding, could not save him from disgraceful failure as a rival of Shakspeare, but raised him far above the level of Boileau. His command of language was immense. With him died the secret of the old poetical diction of England,—the art of producing rich effects by familiar words. In the following century, it was as completely lost as the Gothic method of painting glass, and was but poorly supplied by the laborious and tesselated imitations of Mason and Gray. On the other hand, he was the first writer under whose skilful management the scientific vocabulary fell into natural and pleasing verse. In this department, he succeeded as completely as his contemporary Gibbons succeeded in the similar enterprise of carving the most delicate flowers from heart of oak. The toughest and most knotty parts of language became ductile at his touch. His versification, in the same manner, while it gave the first model of that neatness and precision which the following generation esteemed so highly, exhibited, at the same time, the last examples of nobleness, freedom, variety of pause and cadence. His tragedies in rhyme, however worthless in themselves, had at least served the purpose of nonsense-verses: they had taught him all the arts of melody which the heroic couplet admits. For bombast, his prevailing vice, his new subjects gave little opportunity; his better taste gradually discarded it.

He possessed, as we have said, in a pre-eminent degree, the power of reasoning in verse; and this power was now peculiarly useful to him. His logic is by no means uniformly sound. On points of criticism he always reasons ingeniously; and, when he is disposed to be honest, correctly. But the theological and political questions which he understook to treat in verse were precisely those which he understood least. His arguments, therefore, are often worthless. But the manner in which they are stated is beyond all praise. The style is transparent. The topics follow each other in the happiest order. The objections are drawn up in such a manner, that the whole fire of the reply may be brought to bear on them. The circumlocutions which are substituted for technical phrases, are clear, neat, and exact. The illustrations at once adorn and elucidate the reasoning. The sparkling epigrams of Cowley, and the simple garrulity of the burlesque poets of Italy, are alternately employed, in the happiest manner, to give effect to what is obvious, or clearness to what is obscure.

His literary creed was catholic, even to latitudinarianism; not from any want of acuteness, but from a disposition to be easily satisfied. He was quick to discern the smallest glimpse of merit; he was indulgent even to gross improprieties, when accompanied by any redeeming talent. When he said a severe thing, it was to serve a temporary purpose—to support an argument, or to tease a rival. Never was so able a critic so free from fastidiousness. He loved the old poets, especially Shakspeare. He admired the ingenuity which Donne and Cowley had so wildly abused. He did jus-

tice, amidst the general silence, to the memory of Milton. He praised to the skies the schoolboy lines of Addison. Always looking on the fair side of every object, he admired extravagance, on account of the invention which he supposed it to indicate; he excused affectation in favour of wit; he tolerated even tameness, for the sake of the correctness which was its concomitant.

It was probably to this turn of mind, rather than to the more disgraceful causes which Johnson has assigned, that we are to attribute the exaggeration which disfigures the panegyrics of Dryden. No writer, it must be owned, has carried the flattery of dedication to a greater length. But this was not, we suspect, merely interested servility; it was the overflowing of a mind singularly disposed to admiration,—of a mind which diminished vices, and magnified virtues and obligations. The most adulatory of his addresses is that in which he dedicates the State of Innocence to Mary of Modena. Johnson thinks it strange that any man should use such language, without self-detestation. But he has not remarked, that to the very same work is prefixed an eulogium on Milton, which certainly could not have been acceptable at the court of Charles the Second. Many years later, when Whig principles were in a great measure triumphant, Sprat refused to admit a monument of John Philips into Westminster Abbey—because, in the epitaph, the name of Milton incidentally occurred. The wall of his church, he declared, should not be polluted by the name of a republican! Dryden was attached, both by principle and interest, to the Court. But nothing could deaden his sensibility to excellence. We are unwilling to accuse him severely, because the same disposition, which prompted him to pay so generous a tribute to the memory of a poet whom his patrons detested, hurried him into extravagance when he discribed a princess, distinguished by the splendour of her beauty, and the graciousness of her manners.

This is an amiable temper; but it is not the temper of great men. Where there is elevation of character, there will be fastidiousness. It is only in novels, and on tombstones, that we meet with people who are indulgent to the faults of others, and unmerciful to their own; and Dryden, at all events, was not one of these paragons. His charity was extended most liberally to others, but it certainly began at home. In taste he was by no means deficient. His critical works are, beyond all comparison, superior to any which had, till then, appeared in England. They were generally intended as apologies for his own poems, rather than as expositions of general principles; he, therefore, often attempts to deceive the reader by sophistry which could scarcely have deceived himself. His dicta are the dicta not of a judge, but of an advocate;—often of an advocate in an unsound cause. Yet, in the very act of misrepresenting the laws of composition, he shows how well he understands them. But he was perpetually acting against his better knowledge. His sins were sins against light. He trusted, that what was bad would be pardoned for the sake of what was good. What was good he took no pains to make better. He was not, like most persons who rise to eminence, dissatisfied even with his best productions. He had set up no unattainable standard of perfection, the contemplation of which might at once improve and mortify him. His path was not attended by an unapproachable mirage of excellence, for ever receding, and for ever pursued. He was not disgusted by the negligence of others, and he extended the same *toleration* to himself. His mind was of a slovenly character,—fond of

splendour, but indifferent to neatness. Hence most of his writings exhibit the sluttish magnificence of a Russian noble, all vermin and diamonds, dirty linen and inestimable sables. Those faults which spring from affectation, time and thought in a great measure removed from his poems. But his carelessnes he retained to the last. If towards the close of his life he less frequently went wrong from negligence, it was only because long habits of composition rendered it more easy to go right. In his best pieces, we find false rhymes,—triplets, in which the third line appears to be a mere intruder, and, while it breaks the music, adds nothing to the meaning,—gigantic Alexandrines of fourteen and sixteen syllables, and truncated verses for which he never troubled himself to find a termination or a partner.

Such are the beauties and the faults which may be found in profusion throughout the later works of Dryden. A more just and complete estimate of his natural and acquired powers,—of the merits of his style and of its blemishes, may be formed from the Hind and Panther, than from any of his other writings. As a didactic poem, it is far superior to the Religio Laici. The satirical parts, particularly the character of Burnet, are scarcely inferior to the best passages in Absalom and Achitophel. There are, moreover, occasional touches of a tenderness which affects us more, because it is decent, rational, and manly, and reminds us of the best scenes in his tragedies. His versification sinks and swells in happy unison with the subject; and his wealth of language seems to be unlimited. Yet, the carelessness with which he has constructed his plot, and the innumerable inconsistencies into which he is every moment falling, detract much from the pleasure which such various excellence affords.

In Absalom and Achitophel he hit upon a new and rich vein, which he worked with signal success. The ancient satirists were the subjects of a despotic government. They were compelled to abstain from political topics, and to confine their attention to the frailties of private life. They might, indeed, sometimes venture to take liberties with public men,

"Quorum Flaminia tegitur cinis atque Latina."

Thus Juvenal immortalised the obsequious senators, who met to decide the fate of the memorable turbot. His fourth satire frequently reminds us of the great political poem of Dryden; but it was not written till Domitian had fallen, and it wants something of the peculiar flavour, which belongs to contemporary invective alone. His anger has stood so long, that, though the body is not impaired, the effervescence, the first cream, is gone. Boileau lay under similar restraints; and if he had been free from all restraint, would have been no match for our countryman.

The advantages which Dryden derived from the nature of his subject he improved to the very utmost. His manner is almost perfect. The style of Horace and Boileau is fit only for light subjects. The Frenchman did indeed attempt to turn the theological reasonings of the Provincial Letters into verse, but with very indifferent success. The glitter of Pope is cold. The ardour of Persius is without brilliancy. Magnificent versification and ingenious combinations rarely harmonise with the expression of deep feeling. In Juvenal and Dryden alone we have the sparkle and the heat together. Those great satirists succeeded in communicating the fervour of their feelings to materials the most incombustible, and kindled the whole mass into a blaze, at once dazzling and destructive. We cannot, indeed, think without regret of the

part which so eminent a writer as Dryden took in the disputes of that period. There was, no doubt, madness and wickedness on both sides: but there was liberty on the one, and despotism on the other. On this point, however, we will not dwell. At Talavera the English and French troops for a moment suspended their conflict, to drink of a stream which flowed between them. The shells were passed across from enemy to enemy, without apprehension or molestation. We, in the same manner, would rather assist our political adversaries to drink with us of that fountain of intellectual pleasure, which should be the common refreshment of both parties, than disturb and pollute it with the havoc of unseasonable hostilities.

Mac-Flecknoe is inferior to Absalom and Achitophel, only in the subject. In the execution it is even superior. But the greatest work of Dryden was the last, the Ode on Saint Cecilia's day. It is the masterpiece of the second class of poetry, and ranks but just below the great models of the first. It reminds us of the Pedasus of Achilles—

Ὅς, καὶ θνητὸς ἐὼν, ἵππεύ' ἵπποις ἀθανάτοισι.

By comparing it with the impotent ravings of the heroic tragedies, we may measure the progress which the mind of Dryden had made. He had learned to avoid a too audacious competition with higher natures, to keep at a distance from the verge of bombast or nonsense, to venture on no expression which did not convey a distinct idea to his own mind. There is none of that "darkness visible" of style which he had formerly affected, and in which the greatest poets only can succeed. Everything is definite, significant, and picturesque. His early writings resembled the gigantic works of those Chinese gardeners who attempt to rival nature herself, to form cataracts of terrific height and sound, to raise precipitous ridges of mountains, and to imitate, in artificial plantations, the vastness and the gloom of some primeval forest. This manner he abandoned; nor did he ever adopt the Dutch taste which Pope affected, the trim parterres, and the rectangular walks. He rather resembled our Kents and Browns, who, imitating the great features of landscape without emulating them, consulting the genius of the place, assisting nature, and carefully disguising their art, produced, not a Chamouni or a Niagara, but a Stowe or a Hagley.

We are, on the whole, inclined to regret that Dryden did not accomplish his purpose of writing an Epic poem. It certainly would not have been a work of the highest rank. It would not have rivalled the Iliad, the Odyssey, or the Paradise Lost; but it would have been superior to the productions of Apollonius, Lucan, or Statius, and not inferior to the Jerusalem Delivered. It would probably have been a vigorous narrative, animated with something of the spirit of the old romances, enriched with much splendid description, and interspersed with fine declamations and disquisitions. The danger of Dryden would have been from aiming too high; from dwelling too much, for example, on his angels of kingdoms, and attempting a competition with that great writer, who in his own time had so incomparably succeeded in representing to us the sights and sounds of another world. To Milton, and to Milton alone, belonged the secrets of the great deep, the beach of sulphur, the ocean of fire, the palaces of the fallen dominations, glimmering through the everlasting shade, the silent wilderness of verdure and fragrance where armed angels kept watch over the sleep of the first lovers, the portico of diamond, the sea of jasper, the sapphire pavement empurpled with celestial roses, and the infinite ranks of the Cherubim, blazing

with adamant and gold. The council, the tournament, the procession, the crowded cathedral, the camp, the guard-room, the chase, were the proper scenes for Dryden.

But we have not space to pass in review all the works which Dryden wrote. We, therefore, will not speculate longer on those which he might possibly have written. He may, on the whole, be pronounced to have been a man possessed of splendid talents, which he often abused, and of a sound judgment, the admonitions of which he often neglected; a man who succeeded only in an inferior department of his art, but who, in that department, succeeded pre-eminently; and who, with a more independent spirit, a more anxious desire of excellence, and more respect for himself, would, in his own walk, have attained to absolute perfection.

SWIFT.*

With the most unfavourable impressions of Swift's personal and political character,† perhaps it is not easy for us to judge quite fairly of his works. Yet we are far from being insensible to their great and very peculiar merits. Their chief peculiarity is, that they were almost all what may be called occasional productions—not written for fame or for posterity—from the fulness of the mind, or the desire of instructing mankind—but on the spur of the occasion—for promoting some temporary and immediate object, and producing a practical effect, in the attainment of which their whole importance centered. With the exception of the Tale of a Tub, Gulliver, The Polite Conversation, and about half a volume of poetry, this description will apply to almost all that is now before us;—and it is no small proof of the vigour and vivacity of his genius, that posterity should have been so anxious to preserve these careless and hasty productions, upon which their author appears to have set no other value than as means for the attainment of an end. The truth is, accordingly, that *they are* very extraordinary performances; and, considered with a view to the purposes for which they were intended, have probably never been equalled in any period of the world. They are written with great plainness, force, and intrepidity—advance at once to the matter in dispute—give battle to the strength of the enemy, and never seek any kind of advantage from darkness or obscurity. Their distinguishing feature, however, is the force and the vehemence of the invective in which they abound:—the copiousness, the steadiness, the perseverance, and the dexterity with which abuse and ridicule are showered upon the adversary. This, we think, was, beyond all doubt, Swift's great talent, and the weapon by which he made himself formidable. He was, without exception, the greatest and most efficient *libeller* that ever exercised the trade; and possessed, in an eminent degree, all the qualifications which it requires:—a clear head—a cold heart—a vindictive temper—no admiration of noble qualities—no sympathy with suffering—not much conscience—not much consistency—a ready wit—a sarcastic humour—a thorough knowledge of the baser parts of human nature—and a complete familiarity

* Scott's Life of Swift.—Vol. xxvii. p. 44. September, 1816.

† See a sketch of Swift's political and personal character, written with unsparing severity, pages 8—44, of the article from which the above strictures on his literary merits are taken.

with every thing that is low, homely, and familiar in language. These were his gifts;—and he soon felt for what ends they were given. Almost all his works are libels; generally upon individuals, sometimes upon sects and parties, sometimes upon human nature. Whatever be his end, however, personal abuse, direct—vehement, unsparing invective, is his means. It is his sword and his shield, his panoply and his chariot of war. In all his writings, accordingly, there is nothing to raise or exalt our notions of human nature,—but every thing to vilify and degrade. We may learn from them, perhaps, to dread the consequences of base actions, but never to love the feelings that lead to generous ones. There is no spirit, indeed, of love or of honour in any part of them; but an unvaried and harassing display of insolence and animosity in the writer, and villany and folly in those of whom he is writing. Though a great polemic, he makes no use of general principles, nor ever enlarges his view to a wide or comprehensive conclusion. Every thing is particular with him, and, for the most part, strictly personal. To make amends, however, we do think him quite without a competitor in personalities. With a quick and sagacious spirit, and a bold and popular manner, he joins an exact knowledge of all the strong and the weak parts of every cause he has to manage; and without the least restraint from delicacy, either of taste or of feeling, he seems always to think the most effectual blows the most advisable, and no advantage unlawful that is likely to be successful for the moment. Disregarding all the laws of polished hostility, he uses, at one and the same moment, his sword and his poisoned dagger—his hands and his teeth, and his envenomed breath,—and does not even scruple, upon occasion, to imitate his own yahoos, by discharging on his unhappy victims a shower of filth, from which neither courage nor dexterity can afford any protection.—Against such an antagonist, it was, of course, at no time very easy to make head; and accordingly his invective seems, for the most part, to have been as much dreaded, and as tremendous, as the personal ridicule of Voltaire. Both were inexhaustible, well directed, and unsparing; but even when Voltaire drew blood, he did not mangle the victim, and was only mischievous when Swift was brutal; any one who will compare the epigrams on M. Franc de Pompignan with those on Tighe or Bettesworth, will easily understand the distinction.

Of the few works which he wrote in the capacity of an author, and not of a party zealot or personal enemy. The Tale of a Tub was by far the earliest in point of time, and has, by many, been considered as the first in point of merit. We confess we are not of that opinion. It is far too long and elaborate for a piece of pleasantry;—the humour sinks, in many places, into mere buffoonery and nonsense;—and there is a real and extreme tediousness arising from the too successful mimicry of tediousness and pedantry. All these defects are apparent enough even in the main story, in which the incidents are without the shadow of verisimilitude or interest, and by far too thinly scattered; but they become unsufferable in the interludes or digressions, the greater part of which are to us utterly illegible, and seem to consist almost entirely of cold and forced conceits, and exaggerated representations of long exploded whims and absurdities. The style of this work, which appears to us greatly inferior to the history of John Bull or even of Martinus Scriblerus, is evidently more elaborate than that of Swift's other writings,—but has all its substantial characteristics. Its great merit seems to consist in the author's perfect familiarity with all sorts of

common and idiomatical expressions, his unlimited command of established phrases, both solemn and familiar, and the unrivalled profusion and propriety with which he heaps them up and applies them to the exposition of the most fantastic conceptions. To deliver absurd notions or incredible tales in the most authentic, honest, and direct terms, that have been used for the communication of truth and reason, and to luxuriate in all the variations of that grave, plain, and perspicuous phraseology, which dull men use to express their homely opinions, seems to be the great art of this extraordinary humourist, and that which gives their character and their edge to his sly strokes of satire, his keen sarcasms and bitter personalities.

The voyages of Captain Lemuel Gulliver is indisputably his greatest work. The idea of making fictitious travels the vehicle of satire, as well as of amusement, is at least as old as Lucian; but has never been carried into execution with such success, spirit, and originality, as in this celebrated performance. The brevity, the minuteness, the homeliness, the unbroken seriousness of the narrative, all give a character of truth and simplicity to the work, which at once palliates the extravagance of the fiction, and enhances the effect of those weighty reflexions and cutting severities in which it abounds. Yet, though it is probable enough that without those touches of satire and observation the work would have appeared childish and preposterous, we are persuaded that it pleases chiefly by the novelty and vivacity of the extraordinary pictures it presents, and the entertainment we receive from following the fortunes of the traveller in his several extraordinary adventures. The greater part of the wisdom and satire at least appears to us to be extremely vulgar and commonplace; and we have no idea that they could possibly appear either impressive or entertaining, if presented without these accompaniments. A considerable part of the pleasure we derive from the voyages of Gulliver, in short, is of the same description with that which we receive from those of Sinbad the Sailor, and is chiefly heightened, we believe, by the greater brevity and minuteness of the story, and the superior art that is employed to give it an appearance of truth and probability, in the very midst of its wonders. Among those arts, as Mr. Scott has judiciously observed, one of the most important is the exact adaptation of the narrative to the condition of its supposed author.

"The character of the imaginary traveller is exactly that of Dampier, or any other sturdy nautical wanderer of the period, endowed with courage and common sense, who sailed through distant seas, without losing a single English prejudice which he had brought from Portsmouth or Plymouth, and on his return gave a grave and and simple narrative of what he had seen or heard in foreign countries. The character is perhaps strictly English, and can be hardly relished by a foreigner. The reflections and observations of Gulliver are never more refined or deeper than might be expected from a plain master of a merchantman, or surgeon in the Old Jewry; and there was such a reality given to his whole person, that one seaman is said to have sworn he knew Captain Gulliver very well, but he lived at Wapping, not at Rotherhithe. It is the contrast between the natural ease and simplicity of such a style, and the marvels which the volume contains, that forms one great charm of this memorable satire on the imperfections, follies, and vices of mankind. The exact calculations preserved in the first and second part, have also the effect of qualifying the extravagance of the fable. It is said that in natural objects, where proportion is exactly preserved, the marvellous, whether the object be gigantic or diminutive, is lessened in the eyes of the spectator: and it is certain, in general, that proportion forms an essential attribute of truth, and consequently of verisimilitude, or that which renders a narration probable. If the reader is disposed to grant the traveller his postulates as to the existence of the strange people whom he visits, it would be difficult to detect any inconsistency in his narrative. On the contrary, it would seem that he and they conduct themselves towards each other, precisely as must necessarily have happened in the respective circumstances which the author has supposed. In this point of view, perhaps, the highest praise that could have been bestowed on Gulliver's Travels was the censure of a learned Irish prelate, who said the book contained *some* things which he could not prevail upon himself to believe." Vol. 1. p. 340, 341.

That the interest does not arise from the satire, but from the plausible description of physical wonders, seems to be farther proved by the fact, that the parts which please the least are those in which there is most satire and least of those wonders. In the voyage to Laputa, after the first description of the flying island, the attention is almost exclusively directed to intellectual absurdities; and every one is aware of the dulness that is the result. Even as a satire, indeed, this part is extremely poor and defective; nor can any thing show more clearly the author's incapacity for large and comprehensive views than his signal failure in all those parts which invited him to such contemplations. In the multitude of his vulgar and farcical representations of particular errors in philosophy, he nowhere appears to have any sense of its true value or principles; but satisfies himself with collecting or imagining a number of fantastical quackeries, which tend to illustrate nothing but his contempt for human understanding. Even where his subject seems to invite him to something of a higher flight, he uniformly shrinks back from it, and takes shelter in commonplace derision. What, for instance, can be poorer than the use he makes of the evocation of the illustrious dead—in which Hannibal is brought in just to say, that he had not a drop of vinegar in his camp; and Aristotle, to ask two of his commentators, "whether the rest of the tribe were as great dunces as themselves?" The voyage to the Houyhnhmns is commonly supposed to displease by its vile and degrading representations of human nature; but, if we do not strangely mistake our own feeling on the subject, the impression it produces is not so much that of disgust as of dulness. The picture is not only extravagant, but bald and tame in the highest degree; while the story is not enlivened by any of those numerous and uncommon incidents which are detailed in the two first parts, with such an inimitable air of probability as almost to persuade us of their reality. For the rest, we have observed already, that the scope of the whole work, and indeed of all his writings, is to degrade and vilify human nature; and though some of the images which occur in this part may be rather coarser than the others, we do not think the difference so considerable as to account for its admitted inferiority in the powerof pleasing.

His only other considerable works in prose, are the "Polite Conversation," which we think admirable in its sort, and excessively entertaining; and the "Directions to Servants," which, though of a lower pitch, contains as much perhaps of his peculiar, vigorous, and racy humour, as any one of his productions. The Journal to Stella, which was certainly never intended for publication, is not to be judged of as a literary work at all—but to us it is the most interesting of all his productions—exhibiting not only a minute and masterly view of a very extraordinary political crisis, but a truer, and, upon the whole, a more favourable, picture of his own mind, than can be gathered from all the rest of his writings—together with innumerable anecdotes characteristic not only of various eminent individuals, but of the private manners and public taste and morality of the times, more nakedly and surely authentic than any thing that can be derived from contemporary publications.

Of his poetry, we do not think there is much to be said;—for we cannot persuade ourselves that Swift was in any respect a poet. It would be proof enough, we think, just to observe, that, though a popular and most miscellanous writer, he does not mention the name of Shakspeare above two or three times in any part of his works, and has nowhere said a word in his praise. His partial editor admits that he has produced nothing which can

d either sublime or pathetic; and we are of the same opinion as to ıtiful. The merit of correct rhymes and easy diction, we shall not m; but the diction is almost invariably that of the most ordinary ınd the matter of his pieces no otherwise poetical, than that the Muses ıe other persons of the heathen mythology are occasionally men-

He has written lampoons and epigrams, and satirical ballads and songs in great abundance, and with infinite success. But these ıre not poetry;—and are better in verse than in prose, for no other than that the sting is more easily remembered, and the ridicule oc- ly enhanced, by the hint of a ludicrous parody, or the drollery of an linary rhyme. His witty verses where they are not made up of mere d venom, seem mostly framed on the model of Hudibras; and are remarkable, like those of his original, for the easy and apt application ely and familiar phrases, to illustrate ingenious sophistry or unex- llusions. One or two of his imitations of Horace are executed with ıd elegance, and are the best, we think, of his familiar pieces; unless pt the verses on his own death, in which, however, the great charm as we have just stated, from the singular ease and exactness with ıe has imitated the style of ordinary society, and the neatness with ıe has brought together and reduced to metre such a number of na- characteristic, and commonplace expressions. The Cadenus and ı is, of itself, complete proof that he had in him none of the elements y. It was written when his faculties were in their perfection, and rt animated with all the tenderness of which it was ever capable— it is as cold and as flat as the ice of Thule. Though describing a real , and a real perplexity, there is not a spark of fire nor a throb of emo- it from one end to the other. All the return he makes to the warm- creature who had put her destiny into his hands, consists in a frigid ogical fiction, in which he sets forth, that Venus and the Graces la- their gifts on her in her infancy, and moreover got Minerva, by a o inspire her with wit and wisdom. The style is mere prose—or ı string of familiar and vulgar phrases tacked together in rhyme, like eral tissue of his poetry. However, it has been called not only easy but , by some indulgent critics—and therefore, as we take it for granted reads it now-a-days, we shall extract a few lines at random, to ıe censure of the judicious. To us they seem to be about as much as so many lines out of Coke upon Littleton.

" But in the poets we may find
A wholesome law, time out of mind,
Had been confirm'd by Fate's decree,
That gods, of whatsoe'er degree,
Resume not what themselves have given,
Or any brother god in Heaven:
Which keeps the peace among the gods.
Or they must always be at odds:
And Pallas, if she broke the laws.
Must yield her foe the stronger cause;
A shame to one so much adored
For wisdom at Jove's council board;
Besides, she fear'd the Queen of Love
Would meet with better friends above.
And though she must with grief reflect,
To see a mortal virgin deck'd
With graces hitherto unknown
To female breasts, except her own:
Yet she would act as best became
A goddess of unspotted fame.

> She knew, by augury divine,
> Verses would fail in her design
> She studied well the point, and found
> Her foe's conclusions were not sound,
> From premises erroneous brought:
> And therefore the deduction's naught,
> And must have contrary effects
> To what her treacherous foe expects." Vol. xiv. p. 448, 449

The Rhapsody on Poetry, and the Legion Club, are the only two pieces in which there is the least glow of poetical animation; though, in the latter, it takes the shape of ferocious and almost frantic invective, and, in the former, shines out by fits in the midst of the usual small wares of cant phrases and unmeaning misanthropy. In the Rhapsody, the following lines, for instance, near the beginning, are vigorous and energetic: —

> " Not empire to the rising sun
> By valour, conduct, fortune won;
> Not highest wisdom in debates
> For framing laws to govern states;
> Not skill in sciences profound
> So large to grasp the ocean round;
> Such heavenly influence require,
> As how to strize the Muse's lyre.
> Not Cæsar's head on brass design'd,
> Nor bard emboss'd with Homer's mind,
> Not drawn by nicest pencil to the life,
> Can express the image of a wife:
> Where every part demands a share
> Of necessary, decent, fair.
> And proper to enhance the whole,
> Yet quite neglects the single soul:
> A compound mixt of human and divine,
> Like Centaurs, Fauns, and Satyrs old in wine;
> Like sphinxes, winged lions, griffins, bears,
> Or stranger still, like Modern Lords and Heirs." Vol. xiv. p. 310, 311.

Yet, immediately after this nervous and poetical line, he drops at once into the lowness of vulgar flippancy; —

> " What hope of custom in the line,
> While not a soul demands your verse but swine?"

There are undoubtedly many strong lines and much cutting satire in this poem; but the staple is a mimicry of Hudibras, without the richness or compression of Butler; as, for example,

> " And here a simile comes pat in
> Though chickens take a month to fatten,
> The guests in less than half an hour
> Will more than half a score devour:
> So after toiling twenty days
> To earn a stock of pence and praise,
> Thy labours, grown the critic's prey,
> Are swallowed o'er a dish of tea:
> Gone to be never heard of more,
> Gone where the chickens went before.
> How shall a new attempt learn
> Of diff'rent spirits to discern,
> And how distinguish which is which,
> The poet's vein, or mutton's itch?" Vol. xiv. p. 311, 312.

The Legion Club is a satire, or rather a tremendous invective on the first House of Commons, who had incurred the reverend author's displeasure for entertaining some propositions about alleviating the burden of the tithe in Ireland; and is chiefly remarkable, on the whole, as a proof of the extraordinary liberty of the press which was indulged to the disaffected in those days. no prosecution having been instituted, either by that Honourable

lself, or by any of the individual members, who are there attacked y which no public men were ever attacked, before or since. It is serving of attention, as the most thoroughly animated, fierce, rgetic of all Swift's metrical compositions; and though the anima- altogether of a ferocious character, and seems occasionally to verge solute insanity, there is still a force and a terror about it which it from ridicule, and makes us shudder at the sort of demoniacal on with which the malison is vented. The invective of Swift ap- this, and some other pieces, like the infernal fire of Milton's rebel which

> " Scorch'd and blasted and o'erthrew—"

launched even against the righteous with such impetuous fury;

> " That whom it hit none on their feet might stand,
> Though standing else as rocks—but down they fell
> By thousands, angel on archangel roll'd."

carcely necessary to remark, however, that there is never the least n to dignity or nobleness in the style of these terrible invectives; they do not even pretend to the tone of a high-minded disdain or s impatience of unworthiness. They are honest, coarse, and vio- sions of furious anger and rancorous hatred; and their effect de- pon the force, heartiness, and apparent sincerity with which those are expressed. The author's object is simply to vilify his opponent, means to do honour to himself. If he can make his victim writhe, not what may be thought of his tormentor;—or rather, he is con- provided he can make *him* sufficiently disgusting, that a good the filth which he throws should stick to his own fingers; and that ld himself excite some of the loathing of which his enemy is the l object. In the piece now before us, many of the personalities coarse and filthy to be quoted; but the very opening shows the which it is written.

> " As I stroll the city, oft I
> See a building large and lofty,
> Not a bow-shot from the college,
> Half the globe from sense and knowledge;
> By the prudent architect
> Placed against the church direct,
> Making good my grandam's jest,
> 'Near the church'—you know the rest.
> " Tell us what the pile contains?
> Many a head that holds no brains.
> These demoniacs let me dub
> With the name of Legion Club.
> Such assemblies, you might swear,
> Meet when butchers bait a bear:
> Such a noise, and such haranguing,
> When a brother thief is hanging:
> Such a rout and such a rabble
> Run to hear Jack-pudding gabble:
> Such a crowd their ordure throws
> On a far less villain's nose.
> " Could I from the building's top
> Hear the rattling thunder drop,
> While the devil upon the roof
> (If the devil be thunder-proof)
> Should with poker fiery red
> Crack the stones, and melt the lead;
> Drive them down on every scull,
> When the den of thieves is full;

Quite destroy the harpies' nest;
How might then our isle be blest!
"Let them, when they once get in,
Sell the nation for a pin;
While they sit a-picking straws,
Let them rave at making laws;
While they never hold their tongue,
Let them dabble in their dung;
Let them form a grand committee,
How to plague and starve the city;
Let them stare, and storm, and frown
When they see a clergy gown;
Let them, ere they crack a louse,
Call for the orders of the House;
Let them, with their gosling quills,
Scribble senseless heads of bills;
We may, while they strain their throats,
Wipe our —— with their votes.
"Let Sir Tom, that rampant ass,
Stuff his guts with flax and grass;
But, before the priest he fleeces,
Tear the Bible all to pieces:
At the parsons, Tom, halloo, boy!
Worthy offspring of a shoeboy,
Footman! traitor! vile seducer!
Perjured rebel! bribed accuser!
Lay thy paltry privilege aside,
Sprung from Papists, and a regicide!
Fall a-working like a mole,
Raise the dirt about your hole!" Vol. x. p. 548—550.

This is strong enough, we suspect, for most readers; but we sha ture on a few lines more, to show the tone in which the leading cha in the country might be libelled by name and surname in those days

"In the porch Briareus stands,
Shows a bribe in all his hands;
Briareus the secretary,
But we mortals call him Carey.
When the rogues their country fleece,
They may hope for pence a-piece.
"Clio, who had been so wise
To put on a fool's disguise,
To bespeak some approbation,
And be thought a near relation,
When she saw three hundred brutes
All involved in wild disputes,
Roaring till their lungs were spent,
PRIVILEGE OF PARLIAMENT!
Now a new misfortune feels,
Dreading to be laid by th' heels," &c.
"Keeper, show me where to fix
On the puppy pair of Dicks:
By their lantern jaws and leathern,
You might swear they both are brethren.
Dick Fitzbaker, Dick the player!
Old acquaintance, are you there?
Dear companions, hug and kiss,
Toast Old Glorious in your ——;
Tie them, keeper, in a tether,
Let them starve and stink together;
Both are apt to be unruly,
Lash them daily, lash them duly;
Though 'tis hopeless to reclaim them,
Scorpion rods, perhaps, may tame them." Vol. x. 553, 554.

Such were the libels which a Tory writer found it safe to publish ur Whig administration in 1736; and we do not find that any national d bance arose from their impunity,—though the libeller was the mos lebrated and by far the most popular writer of the age. Nor was it m

speration of bad fortune that put that polite party upon the use of this teous style of discussion. In all situations, the Tories have been at libellers—and, as it is fitting, the great prosecutors of libels; and this early age of their glory, had themselves, when in power, en- ed the same licence of defamation, and in the same hands. It will y be believed that the following character of the Earl of Wharton, ctually Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, was publicly printed and sold, s Lordship's name and addition at full length, in 1710, and was one irst productions by which the reverend penman bucklered the cause Tory ministry, and revenged himself on a parsimonious patron. not afford to give it at full length—but this specimen will answer pose.

as, Earl of Wharton, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, by the force of a wonderful con- has some years passed his grand climacteric, without any visible effects of old age, either ly or in his mind; and in spite of a continual prostitution to those vices which usually both. His behaviour is in all the forms of a young man at five-and-twenty. Whether he whistles, or talks bawdy, or calls names, he acquits himself in each beyond a Templar of rs' standing.—He seems to be but an ill dissembler, and an ill liar, although they are the ts he most practises, and most values himself upon. The ends he has gained by lying, be more owing to the frequency, than the art of them; his lies being sometimes detected r, often in a day, and always in a week. He tells them freely in mixed companies, al- e knows half of those that hear him to be his enemies, and is sure they will discover moment they leave him. He swears solemnly he loves, and will serve you; and your back er turned, but he tells those about him, you are a dog and a rascal. He goes constant- yers in the forms of his place, and will talk bawdy and blasphemy at the chapel-door. presbyterian in politics, and an atheist in religion; but he chooses at present to whore ipist.—He has sunk his fortune by endeavouring to ruin one kingdom, and has raised it far in the ruin of another.

ears the gallantries of his lady with the indifference of a stoic; and thinks them well re- d, by a return of children to support his family, without the fatigues of being a father. as three predominant passions, which you will seldom find united in the same man, as om different dispositions of mind, and naturally thwarting each other: these are, love of ve of money, and love of pleasure; they ride him sometimes by turns, sometimes all

Since he went into Ireland, he seems most disposed to the second, and has met with ccess; having gained by his government, of under two years, five and forty thousand y the most favourable computation, half in the regular way, and half in the prudential. vas never yet known to refuse, or keep a promise, as I remember he told a lady, but with tion to the promise he then made (which was to get her a pension); yet he broke even . I confess, deceived us both. But here I desire to distinguish between a promise and a for he will be sure to keep the latter, when he has the fairest offer." Vol. iv. p. 149—152.

have not left ourselves room now to say much of Swift's style, or of neral character of his literary genius:—but our opinion may be col- from the remarks we have made on particular passages, and from our ictory observations on the school or class of authors with whom he ndoubtedly be rated. On the subjects to which he confines himself, nquestionably a strong, masculine, and perspicuous writer. He is finical, fantastic, or absurd—takes advantage of no equivocations in ent—and puts on no tawdriness for ornament. Dealing always with lars, he is safe from all great and systematic mistakes; and, in fact, mostly in a series of small and minute propositions, in the handling ch, dexterity is more requisite than genius; and practical good sense, exact knowledge of transactions, of far more importance than pro- nd high-reaching judgment. He did not write history or philosophy, ty pamphlets and journals;—not satire, but particular lampoons; pleasantries for all mankind, but jokes for a particular circle. Even pamphlets, the broader questions of party are always waived, to way for discussions of personal or immediate interest. His object is not that the Tories have better principles of government than the Whigs,

—but to prove Lord Oxford an angel, and Lord Somers a fiend,—to convict the Duke of Marlborough of avarice, or Sir Richard Steele of insolvency; —not to point out the wrongs of Ireland, in the depression of her Catholic population, her want of education, or the discouragement of her industry; but to raise an outcry against an amendment of the copper or the gold coin, or against a parliamentary proposition for remitting the tithe of *agistment*. For those ends, it cannot be denied, that he chose his means judiciously, and used them with incomparable skill and spirit: but to choose such ends, we humbly conceive, was not the part either of a high intellect or a high character; and his genius must share in the disparagement which ought perhaps to be confined to the impetuosity and vindictiveness of his temper.

Of his style, it has been usual to speak with great, and, we think, exaggerated praise. It is less mellow than Dryden's—less elegant than Pope's or Addison's—less free and noble than Lord Bolingbroke's—and utterly without the glow and loftiness which belonged to our earlier masters. It is radically a low and homely style—without grace and affectation; and chiefly remarkable for a great choice and profusion of *common* words and expressions. Other writers, who have used a plain and direct style, have been for the most part jejune and limited in their diction, and generally give us an impression of the poverty as well as the tameness of their language; but Swift, without ever trespassing into figured or poetical expressions, or ever employing a word that can be called fine, or pedantic, has a prodigious variety of good set phrases always at his command, and displays a sort of homely richness, like the plenty of an old English dinner, or the wardrobe of a wealthy burgess. This taste for the plain and substantial was fatal to his poetry, which subsists not on such elements; but was in the highest degree favourable to the effect of his humour, very much of which depends on the imposing gravity with which it is delivered, and on the various turns and heightenings it may receive from a rapidly shifting and always appropriate expression. Almost all his works, after the Tale of a Tub, seem to have been written very fast, and with very little minute care of the diction. For his own ease, therefore, it is probable they were all pitched on a low key, and set about on the ordinary tone of a familiar letter or conversation; as that from which there was little hazard of falling, even in moments of negligence, and from which any rise that could be effected must always be easy and conspicuous. A man fully possessed of his subject, indeed, and confident of his cause, may almost always write with vigour and effect, if he can get over the temptation of writing finely, and really confine himself to the strong and clear exposition of the matter he has to bring forward. Half of the affectation and offensive pretension we meet with in authors, arises from a want of matter,—and the other half, from a paltry ambition of being eloquent and ingenious out of place. Swift had complete confidence in himself; and too much real business on his hands, to be at leisure to intrigue for the fame of a fine writer;—in consequence of which, his writings are more admired by the judicious than if he had bestowed all his attention on their style. He was so much a man of business, indeed, and so much accustomed to consider his writings merely as means for the attainment of a practical end—whether that end was the strengthening of a *party, or the* wounding a foe—that he not only disdained the reputation *of a composer* of pretty sentences, but seems to have been thoroughly in*different to all* sorts of literary fame. He enjoyed the notoriety and influence

which he had procured by his writings; but it was the glory of having carried his point, and not of having written well, that he valued. As soon as his publications had served their turn, they seem to have been entirely forgotten by their author;—and, desirous as he was of being richer, he appears to have thought as little of making money as immortality by means of them. He mentions somewhere, that except 300*l.* which he got for Gulliver, he never made a farthing by any of his writings. Pope understood his trade better, and not only made knowing bargains for his own works, but occasionally borrowed his friends' pieces and pocketed the price of the whole. This was notoriously the case with three volumes of Miscellanies, of which the greater part were from the pen of Swift.

In humour and in irony, and in the talent of debasing and defiling what he hated, we join with all the world in thinking the Dean of Saint Patrick's without a rival. His humour, though sufficiently marked and peculiar, is not to be easily defined. The nearest description we can give of it, would make it consist in expressing sentiments the most absurd and ridiculous—the most shocking and atrocious—or sometimes the most energetic and original—in a sort of composed, calm, and unconscious way, as if they were plain, undeniable, commonplace truths, which no person could dispute, or expect to gain credit by announcing—and in maintaining them, always in the gravest and most familiar language, with a consistency which somewhat palliates their extravagance, and a kind of perverted ingenuity, which seems to give pledge for their sincerity. The secret, in short, seems to consist in employing the language of humble good sense, and simple undoubting conviction, to express, in their honest nakedness, sentiments which it is usually thought necessary to disguise under a thousand pretences—or truths which are usually introduced with a thousand apologies. The basis of the art is the personating a character of great simplicity and openness, for whom the common moral or artificial distinctions of society are supposed to have no existence; and making use of this character as an instrument to strip vice and folly of their disguises, and expose guilt in all its deformity, and truth in all its terrors. Independent of the moral or satire, of which they may thus be the vehicle, a great part of the entertainment to be derived from works of humour arises from the constrast between the grave unsuspecting indifference of the character personated, and the ordinary feelings of the world on the subjects which he discusses. This contrast it is easy to heighten, by all sorts of imputed absurdities: in which case, the humour degenerates into mere farce and buffoonery. Swift has yielded a little to this temptation in the Tale of a Tub; but scarcely at all in Gulliver, or any of his later writings in the same style. Of his talent for reviling, we have already said at least enough, in some of the preceding pages.*

* The foregoing article has been ascribed by contemporary critics to Mr. Jeffrey. At the time of its publication, it elicited a good deal of discussion from the periodical press. A pamphlet was published in reply, condemnatory of its severity and partiality. It was entitled "A Defence of Dr. Jonathan Swift, in answer to certain Objections on his Life and Writings in No. lviii. of the Edinburgh Review," and noticed at length in the Edinburgh Monthly Review for July, 1820.

COWPER.*

His Personal Character and Merit as an Author.†

The personal character of Cowper is easily estimated, from the writings he has left, and the anecdotes contained in this publication. He seems to have been chiefly remarkable for a certain feminine gentleness and delicacy of character, that shrunk back from all that was boisterous, presumptuous, or rude. His secluded life, and awful impressions of religion concurred in fixing upon his manners something of a saintly purity and decorum, and in cherishing that pensive and contemplative turn of mind by which he was so much distinguished. His temper appears to have been yielding and benevolent; and though sufficiently steady and confident in the opinions he had adopted, he was very little inclined, in general, to force them upon the conviction of others. The warmth of his religious zeal made an occasional exception: but the habitual temper of his mind was toleration and indulgence; and it would be difficult, perhaps, to name a satirical and popular author so entirely free from jealousy and fastidiousness, or so much disposed to show the most liberal and impartial favour to the merit of others in literature, in politics, and in the virtues and accomplishments of social life. No angry or uneasy passions, indeed, seem at any time to have found a place in his bosom; and, being incapable of malevolence himself, he probably passed through life without having once excited that feeling in the breast of another.

As the whole of Cowper's works are now before the public, and as death has finally closed the account of his defects and excellencies, the public voice may soon be expected to proclaim the balance, and to pronounce that impartial and irrevocable sentence which is to assign him his just rank and station in the poetical commonwealth, and to ascertain the value and extent of his future reputation. As the success of his works has, in a great measure, anticipated this sentence, it is the less presumptuous in us to offer our opinion of them.

The great merit of this writer appears to us to consist in the boldness and originality of his composition, and in the fortunate audacity with which he has carried the dominion of poetry into regions that had been considered as inaccessible to her ambition. The gradual refinement of taste had, for nearly a century, been weakening the figure of original genius. Our poets had become timid and fastidious, and circumscribed themselves both in the choice and the management of their subjects, by the observance of a limited number of models, who were thought to have exhausted all the legitimate resources of the art. Cowper was one of the first who crossed this enchanted circle, who regained the natural liberty of invention, and walked abroad in the open field of observation as freely as those by whom it was originally trodden; he passed from the imitation of poets to the imitation of nature, and ventured boldly upon the representation of objects that had not been sanctified by the description of any one of his predecessors. In the ordinary occupations and duties of domestic life, and the consequences of modern manners, in the common scenery of a rustic situation, and the obvious contemplation of our public institutions, he has found a multitude

* See remarks on the religious opinions of Cowper, in an able review of the Life of Reginald Heber, Vol. lii. p. 431.

† Hayley's Life of Cowper.—Vol. ii. p. 80. April, 1803.

of subjects for ridicule and reflection, for pathetic and picturesque description, for moral declamation, and devotional rapture, that would have been looked upon with disdain, or with despair, by most of our poetical adventurers. He took as wide a range in language too, as in matter; and, shaking off the tawdry encumbrance of that poetical diction which had nearly reduced the art to the skilful collocation of a set of appropriate phrases, he made no scruple to set down in verse every expression that would have been admitted in prose, and to take advantage of all the varieties with which our language could supply him.

But while, by the use of this double licence, he extended the sphere of poetical composition, and communicated a singular character of freedom, force, and originality, to his own performances, it must not be dissembled, that the presumption which belongs to most innovators has betrayed him into many defects. In disdaining to follow the footsteps of others, he has frequently mistaken the way, and has been exasperated, by their blunders, to rush into an opposite extreme. In his contempt for their scrupulous selection of topics, he has introduced some that are unquestionably low and uninteresting; and in his zeal to strip off the tinsel and embroidery of their language, he has torn it (like Jack's coat in the Tale of a Tub) into terrible rents and beggarly tatters. He is a great master of English, and evidently values himself upon his skill and facility in the application of its rich and diversified idioms: but he has indulged himself in this exercise a little too fondly, and has degraded some grave and animated passages by the unlucky introduction of expressions unquestionably too colloquial and familiar. His impatience of control, and his desire to have a great scope and variety in his compositions, have led him not only to disregard all order and method so entirely in their construction, as to have made each of his larger poems professedly a complete miscellany, but also to introduce into them a number of subjects, that prove not to be very susceptible of poetical discussion. There are specimens of argument, and dialogue, and declamation, in his works, that partake very little of the poetical character, and make rather an awkward appearance in a metrical production, though they might have had a lively and brilliant effect in an essay or a sermon. The structure of his sentences, in like manner, has frequently much more of the copiousness and looseness of oratory, than the brilliant compactness of poetry; and he heaps up phrases and circumstances upon each other, with a profusion that is frequently dazzling, but which reminds us as often of the exuberance of a practised speaker, as of the holy inspiration of a poet.

Mr. Hayley has pronounced a warm eulogium on the satirical talents of his friend: but it does not appear to us, either that this was the style in which he was qualified to excel, or that he has made a judicious selection of subjects upon which to exercise it. There is something too keen and vehement in his invective, and an excess of austerity in his doctrine, that is not atoned for by the truth or the beauty of his descriptions. Foppery and affectation are not such hateful and gigantic vices, as to deserve all the anathemas that are bestowed upon them; nor can we believe that soldiership, or Sunday music, have produced all the terrible effects which he ascribes to them. There is something very undignified, too, to say no worse of them, in the protracted parodies and mock-heroic passages with which he seeks to enliven some of his gravest productions. The *Sofa* (for instance, in the *Task*,) is but a feeble imitation of "The Splendid Shilling;" the *Monitor* is a copy of something still lower; and the tedious

directions for *raising cucumbers*, which begin with calling a hotbed "a *stercoraceous* heap," seem to have been intended as a counterpart to the tragedy of Tom Thumb. All his serious pieces contain some fine devotional passages; but they are not without a taint of that enthusiastic intolerance which religious zeal seems so often to produce. In a few places, there are symptoms of superstition, also, that do not produce even a good poetical effect. The story of "Young Misagathus," whose horse pitched him over its head into the sea, as a punishment for his blasphemy, is fit only for the Missionary or the Wonderful Magazine.

It is impossible to say any thing of the defects of Cowper's writings without taking notice of the occasional harshness and inelegance of his versification. From his correspondence, however, it appears that this was not with him the effect of negligence merely, but that he really imagined that a rough and incorrect line, now and then, had a very agreeable effect in a composition of any length. This prejudice, we believe, is as old as Cowley among English writers; but we do not know that it has of late received the sanction of any one poet of eminence. In truth, it does not appear to be at all capable of defence. The very essence of versification is uniformity; and while any thing like versification is preserved, it is evident that uniformity continues to be aimed at. What pleasure is to be derived from an occasional failure in this aim, we cannot exactly understand. It must afford the same gratification, we should imagine, to have one of the buttons on a coat a little larger than the rest, or one or two of the pillars in a colonnade a little out of the perpendicular. If variety is wanted, let it be variety of excellence, and not a relief of imperfection. Let the writer alter the measure of his piece, if he thinks its uniformity disagreeable; or let him interchange it every now and then, if he thinks proper, with passages of plain and professed prose; but do not let him torture an intractable scrap of prose into the appearance of verse, nor slip in an illegitimate line or two among the genuine currency of his poem. It can afford no pleasure, we should imagine, to a reviewing general to see a miserable, rickety, and distorted creature staggering along in uniform amidst the tall and stately battalions that march past in splendid regularity before him.

There is another view of this matter that has a little more reason in it. A smooth and harmonious verse is not so easily written, as a harsh and clumsy one: and in order to make it smooth and elegant, the strength and force of the expression must often be sacrificed. This seems to have been Cowper's view of the subject, at least in one passage. "Give me," says he, in a letter to his publisher, "a manly rough line, with a deal of meaning in it, rather than a whole poem full of musical periods, that have nothing but their smoothness to recommend them." It is obvious, however, that this is not a defence of harsh versification, but a confession of inability to write smoothly. Why should not harmony and meaning go together? It is difficult, to be sure; and so it is, to make meaning and verse of any kind go together: but it is the business of a poet to overcome these difficulties, and if he do not overcome them both, he is plainly deficient in an accomplishment that others have attained. To those who find it impossible to pay due attention both to the sound and the sense, we would not only address the preceding exhortation of Cowper, but should have no scruple to exclaim, "Give us a sentence of plain prose, full of spirit and meaning, rather than a poem of any kind that has nothing but its versification to recommend it."

Though it be impossible, therefore, to read the productions of Cowper, thout being delighted with his force, his brilliancy, and his variety; and hough the enchantment of his moral enthusiasm frequently carries us sensibly through all the mazes of his digressions; it is equally true, that e can scarcely read a single page with attention, without being offended at me coarseness or lowness of expression, or disappointed by some "most me and impotent conclusion." The dignity of his rhetorical periods is ten violated by the intrusion of some vulgar and colloquial idiom, and the ll and transparent stream of his diction is broken upon some obstreperous rse, or lost in the dull stagnation of a piece of absolute prose. The effect his ridicule is sometimes impaired by the acrimony with which it is tended; and the exquisite beauty of his moral painting and religious views injured in no small degree by the darkness of the shades which his enusiasm and austerity have occasionally thrown upon the canvass. With l these defects, however, Cowper will probably very long retain his popurity with the readers of English poetry. The great variety and truth of is descriptions; the minute and correct painting of those home-scenes, nd private feelings, with which every one is internally familiar; the terling weight and sense of most of his observations; and, above all, the reat appearance of facility with which every thing is executed, and the appy use he has so often made of the most common and ordinary lanuage; all concur to stamp upon his poems the character of original enius, and remind us of the merits that have secured immortality to hakspeare.

After having said so much upon the original writings of Cowper, we annot take our leave of him without adding a few words upon the merits of the translation with which we have found him engaged for so considerable a portion of his life. That the translation is a great deal more close and literal than any that had previously been attempted in English verse, probably will not be disputed by those who are the least disposed to admire it: that the style into which it is translated is a true English style, though not perhaps a very elegant or poetical one, may also be assumed; but we are not sure that a rigid and candid criticism will go farther in its commendation. The language is often very tame, and even vulgar: and there is by far too great a profusion of antiquated and colloquial forms of expression. In the dialogue part, the idiomatical and familiar turn of the language has often an animated and happy effect; but in orations of dignity, this dramatical licence is frequently abused, and the translation approaches to a parody. In the course of one page, we observe that Nestor undertakes "to entreat Achilles *to a calm*." Agamemnon calls him, "this wrangler here." And the godlike Achilles himself complains of being treated like "a *fellow* of no worth."

"Ye critics, say,
How poor to this was Homer's style!"

In translating a poetical writer, there are two kinds of fidelity to be aimed at. Fidelity to the *matter*, and fidelity to the *manner*, of the original. The best translation would be that, certainly, that preserved both. But, as this is generally impracticable, some concessions must be made upon both sides, and the largest upon that which will be least regretted by the common readers of the translation. Now, though antiquarians and moral philosophers may take great delight in contemplating the state of

manners, opinions, and civilisation, that prevailed in the age of Hor be offended, of course, at any disguise or modern embellishment tl be thrown over his representations, still, this will be but a seconda sideration with most readers of poetry; and if the smoothness of th the perspicuity of the expression, or the vigour of the sentiment, sacrificed to the observance of this rigid fidelity, they will general opinion, that it ought rather to have been sacrificed to them, and *poetical beauty* of the original was better worth preserving than th import of his expressions. The splendour and magnificence of the l diction and versification is altogether as essential a part of his com as the sense and the meaning which they convey. His poetical re depends quite as much on the one as on the other; and a translat give but a very imperfect and unfaithful copy of his original, if he le the half of those qualities in which the excellence of the original co It is an indispensable part of his duty, therefore, to imitate the harm elevation of his author's language, as well as to express his meani he is equally unjust and unfaithful to his original, in passing over the l of his diction, as in omitting or disguising his sentiments. In C elaborate version, there are certainly some striking and vigorous p and the closeness of the translation continually recalls the origina memory of a classical reader; but he will look in vain for the melodi elevated language of Homer in the unpolished verses and co phraseology of his translator.*

* * * * * *

Of Cowper's letters, we may safely assert, that we have rarely r any similar collection, of superior interest or beauty. Though t dents to which they relate be of no public magnitude or moment, remarks which they contain be not uniformly profound or origi there is something in the sweetness and facility of the diction, an perhaps, in the glimpses they afford of a pure and benevolent mi diffuses a charm over the whole collection, and communicates an inte cannot always be commanded by performances of greater dignity tension. This interest was promoted and assisted, no doubt, in derable degree, by that curiosity which always seeks to penetrate privacy of celebrated men, and which had been almost entirely fr in the instance of Cowper, till the appearance of this publication. his writings had long been extremely popular, the author was known to the public; and having lived in a state of entire seclusion f world, there were no anecdotes of his conversation, his habits or o in circulation among his admirers. The publication of his corresp has in a great measure supplied this deficiency; and we now know as much of Cowper as we do of those authors who have spent their the centre and glare of literary or fashionable notoriety. These however, will continue to be read, long after the curiosity is gra which perhaps they owed their first celebrity; for the character with they make us acquainted, will always attract by its rarity, and en its elegance. The feminine delicacy and purity of Cowper's mann disposition, the romantic and unbroken retirement in which his passed, and the singular gentleness and modesty of his whole ch disarm him of those terrors that so often shed an atmosphere of r

* The remarks on Cowper's excellence in epistolary composition are extracted from t *of the third* volume of Hayley's Life of him. Vol. iv. p. 273.

ound the persons of celebrated writers, and make us more indulgent to s weaknesses, and more delighted with his excellences, than if he had en the centre of a circle of wits, or the oracle of a literary confederacy. he interest of this picture is still further heightened by the recollection of at tremendous malady, to the visitations of which he was subject, and by e spectacle of that perpetual conflict which was maintained, through the ater part of his life, between the depression of those constitutional hor- rs, and the gaiety that resulted from a playful imagination, and a heart imated by the mildest affections.

In the letters now before us, Cowper displays a great deal of all those culiarities by which his character was adorned or distinguished; he is quently the subject of his own observations, and often delineates the r features of his understanding with all the industry and impartiality of tranger. But the most interesting traits are those which are uninten- ally discovered, and which the reader collects from expressions that re employed for very different purposes. Among the most obvious, haps, as well as the most important of these, is that extraordinary com- ation of shyness and ambition, to which we are probably indebted for very existence of his poetry. Being disqualified, by the former, from dicating his proper place in the ordinary scenes either of business or of ety, he was excited, by the latter, to attempt the only other avenue to tation that appeared to be open, and to assert the real dignity of the nts with which he felt that he was gifted. If Cowper had acquired cou- enough to read the journals of the House of Lords, or been able to get the diffidence which fettered his utterance in general society, his genius ld probably have evaporated in conversation, or been contented with humbler glory of contributing to the Rolliad or Connoisseur.

CRABBE.*

r. Crabbe is the greatest *mannerist*, perhaps, of all our living poets; and rather unfortunate that the most prominent features of his mannerism not the most pleasing. The homely, quaint, and prosaic style—the and often broken and jingling versification—the eternal full-lengths of and worthless characters,—with their accustomed garnishings of sly and familiar moralising—are all on the surface of his writings; and lmost unavoidably the things by which we are first reminded of him, we take up any of his new productions. Yet they are not the things truly constitute his peculiar manner, or give that character by which ill and ought to be remembered with future generations. It is plain, ed, that they are things that will make nobody remembered—and can , therefore, be really characteristic of some of the most original and erful poetry that the world ever saw.

r. C., accordingly, has other gifts; and those not less peculiar or less gly marked than the blemishes with which they are contrasted—an valled and almost magical power of observation, resulting in descriptions rue to nature as to strike us rather as transcripts than imitations—an

* Crabbe's Tales of the Hall. Lond. 1819.—Vol. xxxii. p. 118. July, 1819.

anatomy of character and feeling not less exquisite and searching—an occasional touch of matchless tenderness—and a deep and dreadful pathetic, interspersed by fits, and strangely interwoven with the most minute and humble of his details. Add to all this the sure and profound sagacity of the remarks with which he every now and then startles us in the midst of very unambitious discussions;—and the weight and terseness of the maxims which he drops, like oracular responses, on occasions that give no promise of such a revelation;—and last, though not least, that sweet and seldom sounded chord of lyrical inspiration, the lightest touch of which instantly charms away all harshness from his numbers, and all lowness from his themes—and at once exalts him to a level with the most energetic and inventive poets of his age.

These, we think, are the true characteristics of the genius of this great writer; and it is in their mixture with the oddities and defects to which we have already alluded, that the peculiarity of his manner seems to us substantially to consist. The ingredients may all of them be found, we suppose, in other writers; but their combination—in such proportions at least as occur in this instance—may safely be pronounced to be original.

Extraordinary, however, as this combination must appear, it does not seem very difficult to conceive in what way it may have arisen; and, so far from regarding it as a proof of singular humorousness, caprice, or affectation in the individual, we are rather inclined to hold that something approaching to it must be the natural result of a long habit of observation in a man of genius, possessed of that temper and disposition which is the usual accompaniment of such a habit; and that the same strangely compounded and apparently incongruous assemblage of themes and sentiments would be frequently produced under such circumstances—if authors had oftener the courage to write from their own impressions, and had less fear of the laugh or wonder of the more shallow and barren part of their readers.

A great talent for observation, and a delight in the exercise of it—the power and the practice of dissecting and disentangling that subtle and complicated tissue of habit, and self-love, and affection, which constitutes human character—seems to us, in all cases, to imply a contemplative rather than an active disposition. It can only exist, indeed, where there is a good deal of social sympathy; for, without this, the occupation could excite no interest, and afford no satisfaction,—but only such a measure and sort of sympathy as is gratified by being a spectator, and not an actor on the great theatre of life—and leads its possessor rather to look on with eagerness on the feats and the fortunes of others, than to take a share for himself in the game that is played before him. Some stirring and vigorous spirits there are, no doubt, in which this taste and talent is combined with a more thorough and effective sympathy; and leads to the study of men's characters by an actual and hearty participation in their various passions and pursuits;—though it is to be remarked, that when such persons embody their observations in writing, they will generally be found to show their characters in action, rather than to describe them in the abstract; to let their various personages disclose themselves and their peculiarities, as it were, spontaneously, and without help or preparation, in their ordinary conduct and speech—of all which we have a very splendid and striking example in the Tales of My Landlord, and the other pieces of that extraor-

ordinary writer. In the common case, however, a great observer, we believe, will be found, pretty certainly, to be a person of a shy and retiring temper,—who does not mingle enough with the people he surveys, to be heated with their passions, or infected with their delusions—and who has usually been led, indeed, to take up the office of a looker-on, from some little infirmity of nerves, or weakness of spirits, which has unfitted him from playing a more active part on the busy scene of existence.

Now, it is very obvious, we think, that this contemplative turn, and this alienation from the vulgar pursuits of mankind, must, in the first place, produce a great contempt for most of those pursuits, and the objects they seek to obtain—a levelling of the factitious distinctions which human pride and vanity have established in the world, and a mingled scorn and compassion for the lofty pretensions under which men so often disguise the nothingness of their chosen occupations. When the many-coloured scene of life, with all its petty agitations, its shifting pomps and perishable passions, is surveyed by one who does not mix in its business, it is impossible that it should not appear a very pitiable and almost ridiculous affair; or that the heart should not echo back the brief and emphatic exclamation of the mighty dramatist—

> ———"Life's a poor player,
> Who frets and struts his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more."—

Or the more sarcastic amplification of it, in the words of our great moral poet—

> "Behold the Child, by Nature's kindly law,
> Pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw;
> Some livelier plaything gives our Youth delight,
> A little louder, but as empty quite:
> Scarfs, garters, gold our riper years engage,
> And beads and prayer-books are the *toys* of Age:
> Pleased with this bauble still as that before,
> Till tired we sleep—and *Life's poor play is o'er!*"

This is the more solemn view of the subject:—but the first fruits of observation are most commonly found to issue in Satire—the unmasking the vain pretenders to wisdom and worth and happiness, with whom society is infested, and holding up to the derision of mankind those meannesses of the great, those miseries of the fortunate, and those

> "Fears of the brave, and follies of the wise,"

which the eye of a dispassionate observer so quickly detects under the glittering exterior by which they would fain be disguised—and which bring pretty much to a level the intellect and morals and enjoyments of the great mass of mankind.

This misanthropic end has unquestionably been by far the most common result of a habit of observation, and that in which its effects have most generally terminated:—yet we cannot bring ourselves to think that it is their just or natural termination. Something, no doubt, will depend on the temper of the individual, and the proportions in which the gall and the milk of human kindness have been originally mingled in his composition.—Yet satirists, we think, have not in general been ill-natured persons—and we are inclined rather to ascribe this limited and uncharitable application of their powers of observation to their love of fame and popularity,—which are well known to be best secured by suc-

cessful ridicule or invective,—or quite as probably, indeed, to the narrowness and insufficiency of their observations themselves, and the imperfection of their talents for their due conduct and extension. It is certain, at least, we think, that the satirist makes use but of half the discoveries of the observer; and teaches but half—and the worser half—of the lessons which may be deduced from his occupation.—He puts down, indeed, the proud pretensions of the great and arrogant, and levels the vain distinctions which human ambition has etablished among the brethren of mankind—he

"Bares the mean heart that lurks beneath a star,"

—and destroys the illusions which would limit our sympathy to the forward and figuring persons of this world—the favourites of fame and fortune. But the true result of observation should be not so much to cast down the proud, as to raise up the lowly—not so much to extinguish our sympathy with the powerful and renowned, as to extend it to all those who, in humbler conditions, have the same claims on our esteem or affection. It is not surely the natural consequence of learning to judge truly of the characters of men, that we should despise or be indifferent about them all;—and though we have learned to see through the false glare which plays round the envied summits of existence, and to know how little dignity, or happiness, or worth, or wisdom, may sometimes belong to the possessors of power and fortune and learning and renown,—it does not follow, by any means, that we should look upon the whole of human life as a mere deceit and imposture, or think the concerns of our species fit subjects only for scorn and derision. Our promptitude to admire and to envy will indeed be corrected, our enthusiasm abated, and our distrust of appearances increased;—but the sympathies and affections of our nature will continue, and be better directed—our love of our kind will not be diminished—and our indulgence for their faults and follies, if we read our lesson aright, will be signally strengthened and confirmed. The true and proper effect, therefore, of a habit of observation, and a thorough and penetrating knowledge of human character, will be, not to extinguish our sympathy, but to extend it—to turn, no doubt, many a throb of admiration and many a sigh of love into a smile of derision or of pity, but at the same time to reveal much that commands our homage and excites our affection in those humble and unexplored regions of the heart and understanding which never engage the attention of the incurious,—and to bring the whole family of mankind nearer to a level, by finding out latent merits as well as latent defects in all its members, and compensating the flaws that are detected in the boasted ornaments of life, by bringing to light the richness and the lustre that sleep in the mines beneath its surface.

We are afraid some of our readers may not at once perceive the application of these profound remarks to the subject immediately before us. But there are others, we doubt not, who do not need to be told, that they are intended to explain how Mr. Crabbe, and other persons with the same gift of observation, should so often busy themselves with what may be considered as low and vulgar characters; and, declining all dealings with heroes and heroic topics, should not only venture to seek for an interest in the concerns of ordinary mortals, but actually intersperse small pieces of ridicule with their undignified pathos, and endeavour to make their readers look on their

ks with the same mingled feelings of compassion and amusement with ich—unnatural as it may appear to the readers of poetry—they, and all icious observers, actually look upon human life and human nature. This, are persuaded, is the true key to the greater part of the peculiarities of the hor before us; and though we have disserted upon it a little longer than s necessary, we really think it may enable our readers to comprehend him, l our remarks on him, something better than they could have done without it. There is, as everybody must have felt, a strange mixture of satire and npathy in all his productions—a great kindliness and compassion for the rors and sufferings of our poor human nature; but a strong distrust of its roic virtues and high pretensions. His heart is always open to pity, d all the milder emotions—but there is little aspiration after the grand d sublime of character, nor very much encouragement for raptures d ecstasies of any description. These, he seems to think, are things ther too fine for the said poor human nature—and that, in our low and ring condition, it is a little ridiculous to pretend, either to very exalted id immaculate virtue, or very pure and exquisite happiness. He not only ever meddles, therefore, with the delicate distresses and noble fires of the eroes and heroines of tragic and epic fable, but may generally be detected ndulging in a lurking sneer at the pomp and vanity of all such superfine naginations—and turning to draw men in their true postures and dimen-ions, and with all the imperfections that actually belong to their condition: —the prosperous and happy overshadowed with passing clouds of *ennui*, nd disturbed with little flaws of bad humour and discontent—the great and wise beset at times with strange weaknesses and meannesses and paltry vexations—and even the most virtuous and enlightened falling far below the standard of poetical perfection—and stooping every now and then to paltry jealousies and prejudices—or sinking into shabby sensualities,—or meditating on their own excellence and importance, with a ludicrous and lamentable anxiety.

This is one side of the picture; and characterises sufficiently the satirical vein of our author: but the other is the most extensive and important. In rejecting the vulgar sources of interest in poetical narratives, and reducing his ideal persons to the standard of reality, Mr. C. does by no means seek to extinguish the sparks of human sympathy within us, or to throw any damp on the curiosity with which we naturally explore the characters of each other. On the contrary, he has afforded new and more wholesome food for all those propensities—and, by placing before us those details which our pride or fastidiousness is so apt to overlook, has disclosed, in all their truth and simplicity, the native and unadulterated workings of those affections which are at the bottom of all social interest, and are really rendered less touching by the exaggerations of more ambitious artists—while he exhibits, with admirable force and endless variety, all those combinations of passions and opinions, and all that cross-play of selfishness and vanity, and indolence and ambition, and habit and reason, which make up the intellectual character of individuals, and present to every one an instructive picture of his neighbour or himself. Seeing, by the perfection of his art, the master passions in their springs, and the high capacities in their rudiments —and having acquired the gift of tracing all the propensities and marking tendencies of our plastic nature, in their first slight indications, or from the very disguises they so often love to assume, he does not need, in order to draw out his characters in all their life and distinctness, the vulgar demon-

stration of those striking and decided actions by which their maturit proclaimed even to the careless and inattentive;—but delights to point to his readers the seeds or tender filaments of those talents and feelings singularities which wait only for occasion and opportunity to burst out astonish the world—and to accustom them to trace, in characters and tions apparently of the most ordinary description, the self-same attrib that, under other circumstances, would attract universal attention, furnish themes for the most popular and impassioned descriptions.

That he should not be guided in the choice of his subject by any reg to the rank or condition which his persons hold in society, may easily imagined; and, with a view to the ends he aims at, might readily be forgiv But we fear that his passion for observation, and the delight he take tracing out and analysing all the little traits that indicate character, and the little circumstances that influence it, have sometimes led him to be ca less about his selection of the instances in which it was to be exhibited, at least to select them upon principles very different from those which them an interest in the eyes of ordinary readers. For the purposes of m anatomy, beauty of form or complexion are things quite indifferent; the physiologist, who examines plants only to study their internal structu and to make himself master of all the contrivances by which their vari functions are performed, pays no regard to the brilliancy of their hu the sweetness of their odours, or the graces of their form. Those v come to him for the sole purpose of acquiring knowledge, may pa cipate, perhaps, in this indifference; but the world at large will wonde them; and he will engage fewer pupils to listen to his instructions, tha he had condescended in some degree to consult their predilections in beginning. It is the same case, we think, in many respects, with Mr. Crab

Relying for the interest he is to produce, on the curious expositions he i make of the elements of human character; or at least finding his own c gratification in those subtle investigations, he seems to care very little u what particular individuals he pitches for the purpose of these demonstratic Almost every human mind, he seems to think, may serve to display that and mysterious mechanism which it is his delight to explore and expla and almost every condition, and every history of life, afford occasion show how it may be put into action, and pass through its various combi tions. It seems, therefore, almost as if he had caught up the first doze two of persons that came across him in the ordinary walks of life, and t opening up his little window in their breasts, and applying his tests and struments of observation, had set himself about such a minute and curi scrutiny of their whole habits, history, adventures, and dispositions, a thought must ultimately create not only a familiarity, but an interest, wh the first aspect of the subject was far enough from leading any one to exp That he succeeds more frequently than could have been anticipated, we very willing to allow. But we cannot help feeling also, that a little m pains bestowed in the selection of his characters, would have made his po of observation and description tell with tenfold effect; and that, in spit the exquisite truth of his delineations, and the fineness of the perception which he was enabled to make them, it is impossible to take any consider interest in many of his personages, or to avoid feeling some degree of fati at the minute and patient exposition that is made of all that belongs to the

* Several admirable notices of Crabbe's poetry have appeared in the Edinburgh Re See Vol. xii. p. 131.; Vol. xvi. p. 30; Vol. xx. p. 277.

PARALLEL BETWEEN CRABBE AND WORDSWORTH.*

There is a truth and a force in many of Crabbe's delineations of rustic life, which is calculated to sink deep into the memory; and, being confirmed by daily observation, they are recalled upon innumerable occasions, when the ideal pictures of more fanciful authors have lost all their interest. For ourselves at least, we profess to be indebted to Mr. Crabbe for many of these strong impressions; and have known more than one of our unpoetical acquaintances, who declared they could never pass by a parish workhouse, without thinking of the description of it they had read at school in the Poetical Extracts. The volume before us will renew, we trust, and extend many such impressions. It contains all the former productions of the author, with about double their bulk of new matter; most of it in the same taste and manner of composition with the former, and some of a kind, of which we have had no previous example in this author. The whole, however, is of no ordinary merit, and will be found, we have little doubt, a sufficient warrant for Mr. Crabbe to take his place as one of the most original, nervous, and pathetic poets of the present century.

His characteristic, certainly, is force, and truth of description, joined for the most part to great selection and condensation of expression; that kind of strength and originality which we meet with in Cowper, and that sort of diction and versification which we admire in Goldsmith. If he can be said to have imitated the manner of any author, it is Goldsmith, indeed, who has been the object of his imitation; and yet his general train of thinking, and his views of society, are so extremely opposite, that, when "The Village" was first published, it was commonly considered as an antidote or an answer to the more captivating representations of "The Deserted Village." Compared with this celebrated author, he will be found, we think, to have more vigour and less delicacy; and while he must be admitted to be inferior in the fine finish and uniform beauty of his composition, we cannot help considering him as superior, both in the variety and the truth of his pictures. Instead of that uniform tint of pensive tenderness which overspreads the whole poetry of Goldsmith, we find in Mr. Crabbe many gleams of gaiety and humour. Though his habitual views of life are more gloomy than those of his rival, his poetical temperament seems far more cheerful; and when the occasions of sorrow and rebuke are gone by, he can collect himself for sarcastic pleasantry, or unbend in innocent playfulness. His diction, though generally pure and powerful, is sometimes harsh, and sometimes quaint; and he has occasionally admitted a couplet or two in a state so unfinished, as to give a character of inelegance to the passages in which they occur. With a taste less disciplined and less fastidious than that of Goldsmith, he has, in our apprehension, a keener eye for observation, and a readier hand for the delineation of what he has observed. There is less poetical keeping in his whole performance; but the groups of which it consists are conceived, we think, with equal genius, and drawn with greater spirit as well as greater fidelity.

It is not quite fair, perhaps, thus to draw a detailed parallel between a living poet, and one whose reputation has been sealed by death, and by the immutable sentence of a surviving generation. Yet there are so few of his

* Crabbe's Poems. London. 1808.—Vol. xii. p. 131.

contemporaries to whom Mr. Crabbe bears any resemblance, that we c scarcely explain our opinion of his merit, without comparing him to some his predecessors. There is one set of writers, indeed, from whose works th of Mr. Crabbe might receive all that elucidation which results from co trast, and from an entire opposition in all points of taste and opinion. allude now to the Wordsworths, and the Southeys, and Coleridges, and that misguided fraternity, that, with good intentions and extraordin talents, are labouring to bring back our poetry to the fantastical oddity puling childishness of Withers, Quarles, or Marvel. These gentlem write a great deal about rustic life, as well as Mr. Crabbe; and they e agree with him in dwelling much on its discomforts: but nothing can more opposite than the views they take of the subject, or the manner which they execute their representation of them.

Mr. Crabbe exhibits the common people of England pretty much as t are, and as they must appear to every one who will take the trouble of amining into their condition; at the same time that he renders his sketc in a very high degree interesting and beautiful,—by selecting what is m fit for description,—by grouping them into such forms as must catch attention or awake the memory,—and by scattering over the whc such traits of moral sensibility, of sarcasm, and of useful reflection, every one must feel to be natural and own to be powerful. The gent men of the new school, on the other hand, scarcely ever condescend to t their subjects from any description of persons that are at all known to common inhabitants of the world; but invent for themselves certain whi sical and unheard-of beings, to whom they impute some fantastical co bination of feelings, and labour to excite our sympathy for them, either placing them in incredible situations, or by some strained and exaggera moralisation of a vague and tragical description. Mr. Crabbe, in sh shows us something which we have all seen, and may see, in real life; draws from it such feelings and such reflections as every human being m acknowledge that it is calculated to excite. He delights us by the truth, vivid and picturesque beauty, of his representations, and by the force pathos of the sensations with which we feel that they ought to be connect Mr. Wordsworth and his associates show us something that mere obs vation never yet suggested to any one. They introduce us to beings wh existence was not previously suspected by the acutest observers of natu and excite an interest for them, more by an eloquent and refined anal of their own capricious feelings, than by any obvious or very intelligi ground of sympathy in their situation. The common sympathies of nature, and our general knowledge of human character, do not enable either to understand, or to enter into, the feelings of their characters. Tl are unique specimens and varieties of our kind, and must be studied un a separate classification. They have an idiosyncrasy, upon which all co mon occurrences operate in a peculiar manner; and those who are l acquainted with human nature, and with other poetry, are at a loss to co prehend the new system of feeling and of writing which is here introdu to their notice. Instead of the men and women of ordinary humanity, have certain moody and capricious personages, made after the poet's o heart and fancy,—acting upon principles, and speaking in a language of th own. Thus, instead of employing the plain vulgar character, which m be read by all the world, these writers make use of a sort of cipher, whi *can only be learned* with pains and study; and, dressing up all their perso

d of grotesque masquerade habit, they have given birth to a species osition more fantastic and unnatural than a pastoral or an opera. s unnatural composition, however, they have introduced a great eloquence and beauty, and have put many natural thoughts and ; expressions into the mouths of their imaginary persons. By this and by the novelty of their manner, they have seduced many into admiration of their genius, and even made some willing to believe, ir conception of character is in itself just and natural, and that all ig writers have been in an error with regard to that great element y. Many, to be sure, found it impossible to understand either their ; or their example; and, unable to recognise the traits of our com- ture in the strange habiliments with which these ingenious persons rned it, gave up the attempt in despair; and, recurring to easier , looked on, with mixed wonder and contempt, while they were ig the suffrages of their admirers. Many, however, did understand a id, in their raised imaginations, fancied that they admired the whole; thers, who only guessed at a passage here and there, laboured, by ncomiums, to have it thought that there was nothing which passed mprehension.

e who are acquainted with the Lyrical Ballads, or the more recent tion of Mr. Wordsworth, will scarcely deny the justice of this re- ation; but in order to vindicate it to such as do not enjoy that ines- advantage, we must beg leave to make a few hasty references to the and by far the least exceptionable, of these productions.

lage schoolmaster, for instance, is a pretty common poetical cha- Goldsmith has drawn him inimitably; so has Shenstone, with the hange of sex; and Mr. Crabbe, in two passages, has followed their s. Now, Mr. Wordsworth has a village schoolmaster also—a ge who makes no small figure in three or four of his poems. But it traits is this worthy old gentleman delineated by the new poet? lantry—no innocent vanity of learning—no mixture of indulgence e pride of power, and of poverty with the consciousness of rare ac- ents. Every feature which belongs to the situation, or marks the er in common apprehension, is scornfully discarded by Mr. Words- who represents this grey-haired rustic pedagogue as a sort of half entimental person, overrun with fine feelings, constitutional mer- , and a most humorous melancholy. Here are the two stanzas in this consistent and intelligible character is portrayed. The diction ast as new as the conception.

> " The sighs which Matthew heard were sighs
> Of one tired out with *fear* and *madness;*
> The tears which came to Matthew's eyes
> Were tears of light—*the oil of gladness.*
>
> Yet sometimes, when the secret cup
> Of still and serious thought went round,
> He seem'd as if he *drank it up,*
> He felt with spirit so profound.
>
> Thou *soul,* of God's best *earthly mould,*" &c.

rail damsel is a character common enough in all poems; and one upon many fine and pathetic lines have been expended. Mr. Wordsworth ritten more than three hundred lines on that subject: but, instead of mages of *tenderness, or delicate* representation of intelligible feelings,

he has contrived to tell us nothing whatever of the unfortunate fair one, but that her name is Martha Ray, and that she goes up to the top of a hill, in a red cloak, and cries "O misery!" All the rest of the poem is filled with a description of an old thorn and a pond, and of the silly stories which the neighbouring old women told about them.

The sports of childhood, and the untimely death of promising youth, is also a common topic of poetry. Mr. Wordsworth has made some blank verse about it; but, instead of the delightful and picturesque sketches with which so many authors of moderate talents have presented us on this inviting subject, all that he is pleased to communicate of the rustic child is that he used to amuse himself with shouting to the owls, and hearing them answer. To make amends for this brevity, the process of his mimicry is most accurately described.

> ——— "With fingers interwoven, both hands
> Press'd closely, palm to palm, and to his mouth
> Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
> Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
> That they might answer him."——

This is all we hear of him; and for the sake of this one accomplishment, we are told, that the author has frequently stood mute, and gazed on his grave, for half an hour together!

Love, and the fantasies of lovers, have afforded an ample theme to poets of all ages. Mr. Wordsworth, however, has thought fit to compose a piece, illustrating this copious subject by one single thought. A lover trots away to see his mistress one fine evening, staring all the way at the moon; when he comes to her door,

> "O mercy! to myself I cried,
> If Lucy should be dead!"

And there the poem ends!

Now, we leave it to any reader of common candour and discernment to say, whether these representations of character and sentiment are drawn from that eternal and universal standard of truth and nature, which every one is knowing enough to recognise, and no one great enough to depart from with impunity; or whether they are not formed, as we have described them, upon certain fantastic and affected peculiarities in the mind or fancy of the author, into which it is most improbable that many of his readers will enter, and which cannot, in some cases, be comprehended without much effort and explanation. Instead of multiplying instances of these wide and wilful aberrations from ordinary nature, it may be more satisfactory to produce the author's own admission of the narrowness of the plan upon which he writes, and of the very extraordinary circumstances which he himself sometimes thinks it necessary for his readers to keep in view, in order to understand the beauty or propriety of his delineations.

A pathetic tale of guilt or superstition may be told, we are apt to fancy, by the poet himself, in his general character of poet, with full as much effect as by any other person. An old nurse, at any rate, or a monk or parish clerk, is always at hand to give grace to such a narration. None of these, however, would satisfy Mr. Wordsworth. He has written a long poem of this sort, in which he thinks it indispensably necessary to apprise the reader, that he has endeavoured to represent the language and sentiments *of a particular* character—of which character, he adds, "the reader

will have a general notion, if he has ever known a man, *a captain of a small trading vessel*, for example, who, being *past the middle age of life*, has retired upon *an annuity, or small independent income*, to some *village* or country town, of which he was *not a native*, or in which he had not been accustomed to live."

Now, we must be permitted to doubt, whether, among all the readers of Mr. Wordsworth, there is a single individual who has had the happiness of knowing a person of this very peculiar description; or who is capable of forming any sort of conjecture of the particular disposition and turn of thinking which such a combination of attributes would be apt to produce. To us, we will confess, the *annonce* appears as ludicrous and absurd as it would be in the author of an ode or an epic to say, "Of this piece the reader will necessarily form a very erroneous judgment, unless he is apprised, that it was written by a pale man in a green coat,—sitting cross-legged on an oaken stool,—with a scratch on his nose, and a spelling dictionary on the table."*

From these childish and absurd affectations, we turn with pleasure to the manly sense and correct picturing of Mr. Crabbe; and, after being dazzled and made giddy with the elaborate raptures and obscure originalities of these new artists, it is refreshing to meet again with the spirit and nature of our old masters, in the nervous pages of the author now before us.

* Some of our readers may have a curiosity to know in what manner this old annuitant captain expresses himself in the village of his adoption. For their gratification, we annex the two first stanzas of his story, in which, with all the attention we have been able to bestow, we have been utterly unable to detect any characteristic traits, either of a seaman, an annuitant, or a stranger in a country town. It is a style, on the contrary, which we should ascribe, without hesitation, to a certain poetical fraternity in the West of England, and which, we verily believe, never was, and never will be, used by any one out of that fraternity.

"There is a thorn—it looks so old,
In truth you'd find it hard to say
How it could ever have been young,
It looks so old and grey.
Not higher than a two years' child,
It stands erect, this aged thorn;
No leaves it has, no thorny points;
It is a mass of knotted joints,
A wretched thing forlorn.
It stands erect, and like a stone,
With lichens it is overgrown.

"Like rock or stone, it is o'ergrown
With lichens to the very top,
And hung with heavy tufts of moss,
A melancholy crop.
Up from the earth these mosses creep,
And this poor thorn they clasp it round
So close, you'd say that they were bent,
With plain and manifest intent,
To drag it to the ground;
And all had join'd in one endeavour,
To bury this poor thorn for ever."

DR. DARWIN.

His Philosophical Speculations, and his Merit as Poet.*

Only a few years have elapsed since the genius of the author of "The Botanic Garden" first burst on the public notice in all its splendour. The novelty of his plan, and imposing air of boldness and originality in his poetical as well as philosophical speculations, and a striking display of command over some of the richest sources of poetical embellishment, were sufficient to secure to him a large share of approbation, even from the most fastidious readers, and much more than sufficient to attract the gaze, and the indiscriminating acclamations, of a herd of admirers and imitators. Yet, with all these pretensions to permanent fame, we are much deceived, if we have not already observed, in that of Dr. Darwin, the visible symptoms of decay. Whether in consequence of more sober and chastened reflection, or from mere caprice, or from whatever other cause it may have proceeded, his beauties seem to have quickly palled upon the public taste; and his decline from the exalted place he once appeared to hold, has been unhappily accelerated by the ridicule of tasteless and impotent imitation. Still, however, we presume that the former admirers of Dr. Darwin's poetry will turn with some degree of pleasing expectation to this posthumous work; and though we are very far from thinking that it is likely to produce any new fluctuation of opinion, we may safely promise them the satisfaction of recognising the same characteristic manner, and some of the same peculiar excellences, which distinguish his former compositions. At the same time, we feel little hesitation in stating, that "The Temple of Nature" appears to us, in poetical excellence, to fall far short of "The Botanic Garden;" and that, without possessing an equal share of beauties, its defects are more frequent and obtrusive.

It requires no stretch of candour to admit, that Dr. Darwin was possessed of talents, which, under happier and more judicious direction, might have ensured very great advances in scientific investigation. To great acuteness of observation he joined a singular degree of ingenuity in the combination of particular facts; and with such powers he could scarcely fail of occasional success in attaining original, extensive, and commanding views of his subject. At the same time, his most devoted admirers will hardly venture to dispute that his successes bear no considerable proportion to the number or boldness of his attempts. The causes of these failures do not appear to us to lie very deep; and a few general remarks, in this point of view, on the character of Dr. Darwin's philosophical writings, will supersede a more minute examination of the particular dogmas which form the groundwork of the volume before us.

The fundamental error which appears to us to pervade and infect the whole of Dr. Darwin's scientific speculations, is a presumptuous contempt, or perhaps a gross ignorance, of the legitimate bounds of philosophical enquiry. It may justly excite astonishment, that after all that has been taught on the rules of sound philosophising ever since the days of Bacon, and after the noble examples of their successful application, especially in the physical sciences, which have been exhibited to the imitation of philosophers, there

* Darwin's Temple of Nature.—Vol. II. p. 491. July, 1803.

should still be found so many lamentable instances of the waste of genius in the pursuit of false or unattainable objects. Of these instances we consider Dr. Darwin as decidedly the most notorious and most lamentable that has lately occurred. In his attempts to investigate the phenomena of matter, as well as of mind, it is but rarely indeed that we ever find him proceeding in the legitimate road of observation, by which alone it is given to man to penetrate even those parts of nature that are most within his reach; and it can occasion no surprise that, by thus deserting the only sure guide to discovery, he should often insensibly wander into that forbidden ground where observation and discovery are no longer practicable. It is in the choice of such a course that the disgrace of failure consists; for powers of much higher order than those of Dr. Darwin, when so misdirected, could not have secured a more fortunate issue.

Another error, nearly akin to that we have been describing, but which deserves particular notice, as fatally characterising many of the metaphysical speculations of Dr. Darwin, arises from constantly blending and confounding together the two distinct sciences of matter and of mind. In this censure, we would not be understood as referring directly to that hypothesis of materialism, which is every where assumed by him with the utmost confidence. Ignorant as we are of the nature of matter, beyond a few of its sensible qualities, it would be rash and idle to limit dogmatically the modifications of which it may be susceptible. For similar reasons, indeed, we cannot but regard it as still more rash and unphilosophical to assert the identity of substances, between the known qualities and attributes of which no sameness or analogy have yet been recognised; and in the present state of our knowledge, we should certainly esteem it more rational to adopt that sceptical theory, which rejects the evidence of an alleged identity between matter and the principle of thought, and which rather holds that, in so far as we have any evidence applicable to the question, it tends to the contrary conclusion. But the objection we have here in view, is not aimed at the dogmatical opinions of Dr. Darwin on the nature of mind, but alludes to a favourite mode of investigation, which is completely unphilosophical, inasmuch as it attempts to trace the laws of thought, through the medium of those laws which are solely applicable to unthinking matter. Whatever diversity of opinions may prevail as to the nature of mind, this at least must on all hands be admitted, that there is a class of phenomena, of which our knowledge is derived solely from consciousness; and it appears to us an intuitive proposition, that all our speculations on the laws of these phenomena must be ultimately drawn from the same source. There is another great class of phenomena, of which our knowledge is derived solely from external observation; and from that source, in like manner, must all our speculations respecting them be of necessity derived. We are not *conscious* of the laws which regulate the material world; and no man in his senses ever dreamt of discovering those laws, by turning his thoughts inward upon themselves, any more than, by a similar process, of adding a cubit to his stature. In reversing the process, there seems to be as little propriety, and as little prospect of success. This, however, has been on most occasions the favourite practice of Dr. Darwin; and it is by thus confounding the investigations of physiology and of metaphysics, that he appears to us to have lost himself in that gulf which will probably for ever separate the sciences of matter and of mind. It is no doubt true, that, between the two parts of our constitution, *there is a constant* action and reaction; and the laws which

regulate that connection form of themselves a curious and interesting subject of enquiry. In the investigation of these laws, though the lights which are derived from the two different sources we have mentioned may be sometimes thrown together upon the different parts of a complex phenomenon, yet they can never be suffered to cross or become blended with each other, without violating a fundamental principle of physical as well as metaphysical science.

Under the influence of such mistaken views of the objects and methods of philosophical enquiry, it is evident that no superiority of talents could have secured him against ultimate failure; but, even independently of these considerations, Dr. Darwin's prospects of success in the pursuits of science do not appear to have been extremely promising. While we allow him the credit of much curious knowledge, and of great ingenuity in the application of it, it is impossible to deny that he frequently betrays a want of discernment in the proper evidence of facts, and a strange incapacity for strict inductive reasoning, even from the facts he chooses to assume and bring together. He is ever aiming at the construction of a vast and comprehensive system, but with powers and preparation by no means equal to the task; and his puerile impatience for the completion of his design leaves him but little room for nicety in the choice or compact arrangement of his materials. His ardent imagination and sanguine temper seem to have supplied or concealed the real weakness of this slovenly workmanship; but his own confidence is rarely of a kind to inspire others with the feeling of security. His reader may sometimes be fascinated with the boldness and originality of his views; but the strongest impression which usually remains is, that the author's genius was better fitted to catch what he has himself called "the looser analogies which dress out the imagery of poetry," than to trace the "stricter ones which form the ratiocination of philosophy." If his fame be destined in any thing to outlive the fluctuating fashion of the day, it is on his merit as a poet that it is likely to rest; and his reveries in science have probably no other chance of being saved from oblivion, but by having been "married to immortal verse."

We have ventured already to express our opinion of the inferiority of the "Temple of Nature," in poetical excellence, to the "Botanic Garden." In the choice of this subject, it does not appear to us that he laboured under any comparative disadvantage. In many respects it approaches very closely to that of the poem of Lucretius; and in point of interest, as well as capability of varied description and embellishment, it possesses obvious advantages over the metaphorical adventures of the vegetable kingdom. There is, however, a disadvantage of another kind, which, in perusing the "Temple of Nature," it is impossible for a moment to lose sight of; it is unhappily posterior in date, and both its beauties and blemishes are of a kind which constantly remind us of those of the "Botanic Garden," and as constantly suggest the idea of perfect imitation. Although the tendency to repetition is by no means confined to the poetry of the volume, it is not to the poverty or decay of genius that we are disposed to impute this appearance of sameness; and we rather suspect that it is inseparably connected with the peculiar cast of Dr. Darwin's poetical manner. In the language of painters, Dr. Darwin is decidedly a mannerist; and *mannerism* is a quality which, to say the least of it, is easily exhaustible.

In analysing the peculiar characters of Dr. Darwin's poetry, we are fortunately assisted by the exposition he has given of his own poetical creed. *In one of the critical* "Interludes" of the "Botanic Garden," he has in-

formed his "Bookseller," that, "next to the measure of the language, the principal distinction between poetry and prose appears to consist in this, that poetry admits of but few words expressive of very abstracted ideas, whereas prose abounds with them. And as our ideas derived from visible objects are more distinct than those derived from the objects of our own senses, the words expressive of these ideas belonging to vision make up the principal part of poetic language. Mr. Pope has written a bad verse in the Windsor Forest,

'And Kennet swift, for silver eels *renown'd*.'

The word 'renown'd' does not present the idea of a visible object to the mind, and is thence prosaic. But change this line thus,

'And Kennet swift, where silver graylings *play*,'

it becomes poetry, because the scenery is then brought before the eye."

In the hands of Dr. Darwin this theory has not remained an idle speculation; it appears to have had a powerful influence on the formation of his poetical habits, and may be regarded as the grand source of the beauties and defects which most strongly characterise the whole of his poetry. In all his delineations of external nature, his skill is directed to produce, not an *impressive* but a *picturesque* effect; every circumstance is selected, and every epithet is sought for, which may bring out the object *directly* to the eye; and the most glowing tints are thrown over the whole which the language of vision can supply. Where his subject does not in itself strictly belong to external and visible nature, but presents itself in a general or abstracted state, he scrupulously avoids ever showing it in its native metaphysical nakedness, and his imagination is instantly employed to embody it in a material and visible shape. Bold metaphors, personifications, and allegories, are his constant and sole resources; and in portraying the scenery of this fairy kingdom of his own creation, he adheres strictly to the principle of addressing himself directly and only to the eye. Nor does his propensity to metamorphosis stop here; but even in delineating inanimated external nature, her own graceful and varied forms seem too tame to catch his fancy, till they have been transformed into the living monsters of his own brain.

Few readers will deny that, in following out his own views of poetical writing, Dr. Darwin has displayed very splendid talents; yet we are inclined to think that his own practice affords the most ample illustration of the errors of his theory. Like most other theories, it contains a certain portion of truth without embracing the whole; and the little it contains is rendered mischievous by the exclusion of the remainder. Nobody will dispute that mere *picturesque* effect may often be extremely pleasing, independently of every other consideration; but it is surely a very unjust limitation of the natural range of poetry, to consider it as solely or ultimately employed in the production of such effects. Its general aim is to produce a strong and pleasing *impression*, through the medium of the fancy, or of the passions and feelings; and among the most efficacious of the *means* that are so employed, the delineation of visible forms may claim a very high, perhaps the highest rank. But it is equally certain, that in poetry very powerful impressions may be given by other means, which cannot be reduced within the narrow rules which Dr. Darwin has imposed upon himself in the exercise *of the poetical art*; and it appears to us, that, by the proscrip-

tion of abstract and general language, he has cast away an important instrument in exciting and interesting the feelings of his reader. It is true, indeed, that, even in the representation and expression of the passions, a great deal may be borrowed from the language of vision; but after very liberal allowance, a great deal will be found to remain, which is either of a different origin, or which, in its progress, has ceased to be felt as the vehicle of picturesque imagery.

As the greater part of Dr. Darwin's poetry is properly descriptive, he has of course suffered the less from this limitation of the natural range of poetical composition, and from thus affecting always to present his ideas in a visible form. But there are other evils attending it, by which he appears to us to have been more essentially injured, and which may be considered as directly counteracting and weakening even those *picturesque effects* he is ever ambitious of producing. The outlines of his figures are often drawn with astonishing strength and accuracy; but, by employing only the language of vision, he has given them a certain hardness and coldness of execution; and, by foregoing the use of that which is addressed to the feeling, rather than to the eye, he has neglected to avail himself of those fine and fleeting circumstances and associations which are beyond the reach of the pencil, but which, in poetical painting, may be made to contribute powerfully towards the general impression. In the following well-known lines of Pope, there is an artful and successful combination of the *picturesque* and the *impressive*:—

> "But o'er the twilight groves and dusky caves,
> Long sounding aisles, and intermingled graves,
> Black Melancholy sits, and round her throws
> A deathlike silence, and a dread repose:
> Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene,
> Shades every flower, and darkens every green;
> Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,
> And breathes a browner horror on the woods."

These lines have been happily imitated by Dr. Darwin in his own manner; that is, with a view solely to the picturesque effect of a single isolated figure. There is perhaps little doubt from which of the two a statuary would choose to copy; yet, we will venture to affirm, that in general and impressive effect, the following lines fall short of their original:—

> "O'er the green floor, and round the dew-damp wall,
> The slimy snail and bloated lizard crawl;
> While on white heaps of intermingled bones
> The muse of Melancholy sits and moans;
> Showers her cold tears o'er Beauty's early wreck,
> Spreads her pale arms, and bends her marble neck.
>
> Canto I. l. 119.

The limited system of Dr. Darwin is productive of additional and still more unsurmountable disadvantages, in the delineation of those large and complicated groups which he labours so frequently to exhibit to the fancy of his reader. It seems impossible, merely by the language of vision, to give that due *keeping* or subordination of parts which is essential to true picturesque effect, and which on canvass is accomplished by those gradations of size and of colouring which the rules of perspective prescribe. The different parts are unavoidably presented, not in subordination, but in *succession*; and the effect would be nearly similar to that of an Indian screen, where all the figures are crowded into the fore-ground, without symmetry *or arrangement, in* the full glare of colouring and dignity of natural dimen-

Of this evil Dr. Darwin seems not to have been aware; and certainly
wn practice the most ample illustrations of it are afforded. It im-
nd sometimes destroys, the effect of his most elaborate descriptions,
ves on the mind little else than a confused, dazzling, and painful sen-
The evil is perhaps inseparable from the nature of the medium
ed in poetical description; but at least it admits of palliation by the
ntermixture of those more indirect modes of suggestion which ad-
ıe fancy through the feelings; and by thus bringing forward directly
w the principal figure, while the subordinate parts of the composi-
: suffered to remain, as it were, in the indistinctness and dimness of
э.

most partial admirers of Dr. Darwin's poetry will probably confess,
ɔy experience a certain monotonous effect, which gradually fatigues
gusts, and renders a continued perusal almost intolerable. The cir-
nce is extremely mortifying; but it is plainly connected in part with
ited and mistaken notions of poetry which we have been considering.
ressing himself to the mind only through the medium of one of the ex-
senses, the poet obviously deprives himself of vast resources for vary-
l diversifying the entertainment of his reader, and must be contented
; the changes on ideas and words of a single class. But this mono-
f manner is prodigiously increased by the use which it brings along
: of metaphor, personification, and allegory, the perpetual recurrence
ch can be atoned for by no individual excellence. The utmost fer-
f poetical invention is circumscribed within limited bounds; and when
object, whether of the material or ideal world, is transmuted into
antastical shape of the poet's brain, we need not be surprised, in this
n of monsters, to find the prodigal variety and beauty of nature lost
poverty and formality of art.

emark, somewhat analogous, may perhaps be applied to the diction
Darwin's poetry. It often has the merit of great splendour and
r; but it is always remote from simplicity, and too often in the
le extreme of unnatural affectation. It aims at a uniform grandeur
ıteliness of march; but is frequently sustained only by meretricious
ent and pedantic inversion. It is to this cause that may in part be
ed that monotonous and tiresome effect in the poetry of Dr. Darwin,
ich we have endeavoured to account. The style, which admits of the
variety, is unquestionably that of which the primary and leading
ter is simplicity. Without suffering degradation, it admits of every
ty of becoming ornament; but where ornament is itself the primary
ıding character, it is apt to disdain the association either of simplicity
iety. In attempting to lower its tone, it usually becomes grovelling
dicrous.—The following lines may perhaps afford an apt illustration
happy mixture of prosaic flatness and of figurative bombast need not
ticularly pointed out:—

" Hear, O ye Sons of Time! your final doom,
And read the characters that mark your tomb:
The marble mountain, and the sparry steep,
Were built by myriad nations of the deep,—
Age after age, who form'd their spiral shells,
Their sea-fan gardens and their coral cells:
Till central fires with unextinguish'd sway
Raised the primeval islands into day.—
The sand-fill'd strata stretch'd from pole to pole;
Unmeasured beds of clay, and marl, and coal,

Black ore of manganese, the sinky stone,
And dusky steel on his magnetic throne,
In deep morass or eminence superb,
Rose from the wrecks of animal or herb;
These from their elements by Life combined,
Form'd by digestion, and in glands refined,
Crave, by their just excitement of the sense,
The Bliss of Being to the vital Ens."

Canto IV. l. 429.

The adoption and recurrence of a few favourite images and phrases i likewise contribute its influence to the painful uniformity of Dr. Darw manner; but it is only of subordinate importance. When future cr shall think fit to bestow their labour in detecting the sources of his im tions, they will be at no loss to discover the very liberal use he has mad the ideas and phrases of former poets: yet it is fair to add, that in his giarism he has paid no greater respect to his own property than to that o neighbours.

Among the peculiar characteristics of Dr. Darwin's poetry, and causes of that monotonous feeling of which his readers complain, we l sometimes heard the system of his versification stated as the chief. In however, we cannot agree. It is in this point that we consider him as invulnerable; and the musical cadences of his verses appear to us as h tiful and as various as their general nature admits of. We have not c looked his partiality to the trochaic foot at the commencement of his l and to one or two favourite and prevailing subdivisions of his couplets: without stopping to justify him by the authority of his greatest predeces it may be enough to say, that their recurrence is rarely more frequent to produce an agreeable variety. It is in the structure of his sente and in the selection of his thoughts, not in the measurement of sylla that his characteristic blemishes are to be traced.

We are aware that, in our criticisms on the literary merits of Dr. Dar we have been chiefly occupied in the invidious task of censure. apology will readily suggest itself. We are not insensible of the for his claims to the praise of genius and of various accomplishments his real deserts are not of a kind which lie hid from the general while his blemishes are so intimately blended with his beauties often either to escape observation, or to attract injudicious appl Perhaps few of his readers have, at all times, been on their guard ag this dangerous fascination; and the mere caprice of fashion may tended blindly to mislead a great many more. To have pointed out of the characteristical faults of a writer who threatened at one time to blish a new sect in poetry, may not therefore be without its use. But th we would deprecate the adoption of his manner as a model for imita we should lament to see him robbed of his just portion of qualified pr and we trust we shall be able often to recur with pleasure, certainly pleasing recollections, to the "splendid page" of Dr. Darwin.†

In one respect we feel ourselves compelled to dissent from an op entertained by most of the admirers of Dr. Darwin, and by none

† To those who are fond of tracing resemblances in the thoughts and style of celebrated a the subjoined remarks, in reply to Miss Seward's praise of Dr. Darwin's *originality*, may teresting. They are transcribed from a criticism on Miss Seward's Memoirs of Dr. Dar No. vii. of the Edinburgh Review, p. 230, and seem to form an appropriate conclusion above estimate of Dr. Darwin's poetical genius. They are from the pen of the distinguishe *who reviewed Dr. Darwin's* "Temple of Nature."

rmly than Miss Seward. "One extraordinary and, in a poet of so much genius, unprecedented instance of plagiarism excepted," says Miss Seward, "not one great poet of England is more *original* than Darwin. His design, his ideas, his style, his manner, are wholly his own."

If it were asked, in what chiefly consists the originality of manner which is supposed to characterise the new Darwinian school of English poetry, it would probably be answered, in the *first* place, that the general design of clothing the philosophy of natural history in the gay attire and with all the higher graces of poetry, was novel, at least in any English poet; in the *second* place, that his picturesque style of poetical description, sustained by bold personifications and metaphors addressed exclusively to the eye, is, in a great degree at least, his own; and, *lastly*, that, in the loftiness of his laboured and inverted diction, and in the stately march of his highly polished versification, there are peculiarities of manner which it may be difficult to describe, but which must at once be felt as distinguishing him widely from his great predecessors in English poetry.

It is not our intention to arraign Dr. Darwin of literary depredation on the property of others, of the felonious kind complained of so justly by Miss Seward; nor shall we venture dogmatically to assert that this peculiar manner to which he has bequeathed his name, was formed on a servile imitation of any existing model. It is true, notwithstanding, that, for nearly seventy years, there has existed, in obscurity and neglect, a philosophical poem in the English language, stamped incontrovertibly with all those peculiar characters of the *Darwinian school* to which we have alluded. It it shat obscurity and neglect alone which could have exempted Dr. Darwin from the charge of having imitated an unsuccessful original; and although it may possibly be true that the poem in question was unknown to him, it will at least become necessary hereafter to date the origin of the *school* at an earlier period.

The poem was published* anonymously, in the year 1735, and of its author we have not obtained any information. It is entitled "Universal Beauty;" and its general object is an exposition of whatever is beautiful in the plan and economy of the universe in all its parts. In the prosecution of this object, the author takes a very wide compass; and the general laws which bind the planetary system, the physical laws which peculiarly regulate the globe which we inhabit, the phenomena and provisions of the mineral, the vegetable, and the animal kingdoms, are all brought under poetical review; and the more remote and fanciful allusions of the text are illustrated by a series of philosophical notes. That the resemblance does not stop here, but extends still more strikingly to the other characteristic peculiarities of "the Darwinian manner," may be most effectually illustrated by a few extracts, taken at random.

In the third part, which contains a "survey of vegetable nature," after tracing the analogy of animal and vegetable life, we have the following lines, in illustration of "the various provisions of nature, for protecting and supporting the indigent, as the strawberry, cinquefoil, etc.; and supporting the feeble, as the vine, bryony, ivy, etc.; and thus equally propagating and spreading a universality of delights, pleasures, and enjoyments."

* "Universal Beauty, a Poem." London: J. Wilcox. 1735. Folio. It consists of six parts, published successively, containing each above 400 lines.

" Thus mantling snug beneath a verdant veil,
The creepers draw their horizontal trail;
Wide o'er the bank, the plantal reptile bends,
A down its stem the rooty fringe depends:
The feeble boughs with anch'ring safety binds,
Nor leaves precarious to insulting winds;
The tendrils next of slender helpless size,
Ascendant through luxurious pamp'ring rise;
Kind nature soothes their innocence of pride,
While buoy'd aloft the flow'ring wantons ride,
With fond adhesion round the cedar cling,
And wreathing, circulate their am'rous ring,
Sublime, with winding maturation grow,
And, clench'd, retentive gripe the topmost bough;
Here climb direct the ministerial rock,
And, clasping firm, its steepy fragments lock;
Or various, with agglutinating guile,
Cement tenacious to some neighb'ring pile;
Investing green, some fabric here ascend,
And, clust'ring o'er its pinnacles depend."

Part III. l. 271—290.

In allusion to those plants which are supposed to obey the influe the sun and moon, we find the following lines:—

" Here winding to the Sun's magnetic ray,
The solar plants adore the Lord of Day;
With Persian rites idolatrous incline,
And worship towards his consecrated shrine;
By south, from east to west, obsequious turn,
And moved with sympathetic ardours burn.
To these adverse, the Lunar sects dissent,
With convolution of opposed bent:
From west to east by equal influence tend,
And tow'rds the Moon's attractive crescence bend;
There nightly worship with Sidonian zeal,
And Queen of Heaven, Astarte's idol hail."

Part III. l. 313—324.

We regret that our limits do not admit of the author's description (Pa l. 120—204.) of the circulation of the blood in animals, illustrated picturesque analogy to the motions of the fluid parts of the globe. Tl lowing lines, taken from Part V., refer to that species of insects whicl the beetle, " by a surprising machinery of little springs and hinges, the smooth covering of their backs, and, unfolding their wings that most neatly disposed within their cases, prepare for flight."

" Or who a twofold apparatus share,
Natives of earth, and habitants of air,
Like warriors stride, oppress'd with shining mail,
But furl'd beneath, their silken pennons veil.
Deceived, our fellow reptile we admire,
His bright endorsement and compact attire,
When lo! the latent springs of motion play,
And rising lids disclose the rich inlay;
The tissued wing its folded membrane frees,
And with blithe quavers fans the gathering breeze;
Elate tow'rds heav'n the beauteous wonder flies,
And leaves the mortal wrapt in deep surprise.

" So when the guide led Tobit's youthful heir,
Elect. to win the seven times widow'd fair,
The angelic form, conceal'd in human guise,
Deceived the search of his associate's eyes;
Till swift each charm bursts forth like issuing flame,
And circling rays confess his heavenly frame;
The zodiac round his waste divinely turns,
And waving radiance o'er his plumage burns;
In awful transports wrapt, the youth admires,
While light from earth the dazzling shape aspires."

Part V. l. 127—148.

'e cannot refrain from giving a part of this writer's description of the ion of those planetary systems of which the universe is composed. It avourite topic with both poets.

> " Swift roll'd the spheres to their appointed place,
> Jocund through heaven to run the various race;
> Orb within orb in living circlets turn,
> And central suns through every system burn;
> Revolving planets on their gods attend,
> And towards each sun with awful reverence bend;
> Still towards the loved enlivening beam they wheel,
> And pant, and tremble, like the amorous steel.
> They spring, they revel in the blaze of day,
> Bathe in the golden stream, and drink the orient ray;
> Their blithe satellites with lively glance
> (Celestial equipage) around them dance;
> All, distance due and beauteous order keep,
> And, spinning soft, upon their centres sleep."
>
> Part I. l. 91—104.

ıilar passages might easily be accumulated; but these may serve as a nen of the peculiar manner of this forgotten poet. Of its resemblance t of Dr. Darwin, we shall leave our readers to judge. That there are ıs shades of difference, we have no hesitation to admit; nor do we call stion the decided superiority of the latter. The poem of "Universal y" is indeed extremely unequal: passages occur which are worthy of chard Blackmore; and in others there may be discovered an unsuc- l effort to imitate the fashionable antithetic manner of Pope. Whether the poetry of Darwin would, in the age of Pope, have incurred the ıazard of neglect with that of the writer whom we have ventured to t as his prototype, we shall not pronounce.

ALFIERI.*

e and enthusiasm—irrepressible vehemence and ambition—and an ıt, fastidious, and somewhat narrow system of taste and opinions, he great leading features in the mind of Alfieri. Strengthened, and e degree produced, by a loose and injudicious education, those traits till further developed by the premature and protracted indulgences ry dissipated youth; and when, at last, they admitted of an applica- study, imparted their own character of impetuosity to those more rious exertions;—converted a taste into a passion; and left him, for part of his life, under the influence of a true and irresistible inspira- Every thing in him, indeed, appears to have been passion and un- ed impulse; and, while he was raised above that common level of his rate countrymen by a stern and self-willed haughtiness, that would etter become an ancient Roman, he was chiefly distinguished from rect spirits by the vehemence which formed the basis of his charac- l by the uncontrolled dominion which he allowed to his various and ive propensities. So constantly and entirely, indeed, was he under uence of these domineering attachments, that his whole life and cha- might be summed up by describing him as the victim of a passion for

* Memoirs of Alfieri, written by Himself.—Vol. xv. p. 299. January, 1810.

horses—a passion for travelling—a passion for literature—and a passion for what he called independence.

The memoirs of such a life, and the confessions of such a man, seem to hold out a promise of no common interest and amusement. Yet though they are here presented to us with considerable fulness and apparent fidelity, we cannot say that we have been much amused or interested by the perusal. There is a proud coldness in the narrative, which neither invites sympathy nor flatters the imagination. The author seems to disdain giving himself *en spectacle* to his readers; and chronicles his various acts of extravagance and fits of passion with a sober and languid gravity, to which we can recollect no parallel. In this review of the events and feelings of a life of adventure and agitation, he is never once betrayed into the language of emotion; but dwells on the scenes of his childhood without tenderness, and on the struggles and tumults of his riper years without any sort of animation. We look in vain through the whole narrative for one gleam of that magical eloquence by which Rousseau transports us into the scenes he describes, and into the heart which responded to these scenes,—or even for a trait of that sociable garrulity which has enabled Marmontel and Cumberland to give a grace to obsolete anecdote, and to people the whole space around them with living pictures of the beings among whom they existed. There is not one character attempted from beginning to end of this biography;—which is neither lively, in short, nor eloquent—neither playful, impassioned, nor sarcastic. Neither is it a mere unassuming outline of the author's history and publications, like the short notices of Hume or Smith. It is, on the contrary, a pretty copious and minute narrative of all his feelings and adventures; and contains, as we should suppose, a tolerably accurate enumeration of his migrations, prejudices, and antipathies. It is not that he does not condescend to talk about trifling things, but that he will not talk about them in a lively or interesting manner; and systematically declines investing any part of his statement with those picturesque details, and that warm colouring, by which alone the story of an individual can often exite much interest among strangers. Though we have not been able to see the original of these Memoirs, we will venture to add, that they are by no means well written; and that they will form no exception to the general observation, that almost all Italian prose is feeble and deficient in precision. There is something, indeed, quite remarkable in the wordiness of most of the modern writers in this language,—the very copiousness and smoothness of which seems to form an apology for the want of force or exactness—and to hide, with its sweet and uniform flow, both from the writer and the reader, that penury of thought and looseness of reasoning which are so easily detected when it is rendered into a harsher dialect. Unsatisfactory, however, as they are in many particulars, it is still impossible to peruse the memoirs of such a man as Alfieri without some interest and gratification. The traits of ardour and originality that are disclosed through all the reserve and gravity of the style, beget a continual expectation and curiosity; and even those parts of his story which seem to belong rather to his youth, rank, and education, than to his genius or peculiar character, acquire a degree of importance, from considering how far these very circumstances may have assisted the formation, and obstructed the developement, of that character and genius; and in what respects its peculiarities may be referred to the obstacles it had to encounter, in misguidance, passion, and prejudice. Many of the peculiarities of Alfieri may

e safely referred to the accident of his birth, and the errors of his ducation. His *ennui*, arrogance, and dissipation, are not very unlike hose of many spoiled youths of condition; nor is there any thing very xtraordinary in his subsequent application to study, or the turn of his irst political opinions. The peculiar nature of his pursuits, and the character of his literary productions, afford more curious matter for speculation.

In reflecting on the peculiar misery which Alfieri and some other eminent persons are recorded to have endured, while their minds were withheld from any worthy occupation, we have sometimes been tempted to conclude, that to suffer deeply from *ennui* is an indication of superior intellect; and that it is only to minds destined for higher attainments that the want of an object is a source of real affliction. Upon a little reflection, however, we are disposed to doubt of the soundness of this opinion; and really cannot permit all the shallow coxcombs who languish under the burden of existence to take themselves, on our authority, for spell-bound geniuses. The most powerful stream, indeed, will stagnate the most deeply, and will burst out to more wild devastation, when obstructed in its peaceful course: but the weakly current is, upon the whole, most liable to obstruction; and will mantle and rot at least as dismally as its betters. The innumerable blockheads, in short, who betake themselves to suicide, dram-drinking, or dozing in dirty nightcaps, will not allow us to suppose that there is any real connection between *ennui* and talent; or that fellows who are fit for nothing but mending shoes may not be very miserable, if they are unfortunately raised above their proper occupation.

If it does frequently happen that extraordinary and vigorous exertions are found to follow this heavy slumber of the faculties, the phenomenon, we think, may be explained without giving any countenance to the supposition, that vigorous faculties are most liable to such an obscuration. In the first place, the relief and delight of exertion must act with more than usual force upon a mind which has suffered from the want of it; and will be apt to be pushed farther than in cases where the exertion has been more regular. The chief cause, however, of the signal success which has sometimes attended those who have been rescued from *ennui*, we really believe to be their ignorance of the difficulties they have to encounter, and that inexperience which makes them venture on undertakings which more prudent calculators would decline. We have already noticed, more than once,* the effect of early study and familiarity with the best models in repressing emulation by despair; and have endeavoured, upon this principle, to explain why so many original authors have been in a great degree without education. Now, a youth spent in lassitude and dissipation leads necessarily to a manhood of ignorance and inexperience; and has all the advantages, as well as the inconveniences, of such a situation. If any feeling of strength, ambition, or other extraordinary impulse, therefore, prompt such a person to attempt any thing arduous, it is likely that he will go about it with all that rash and vehement courage which results from unconsciousness of the obstacles that are to be overcome; and it is needless to say how often success is ensured by this confident and fortunate audacity. Thus, Alfieri, in the outset of his literary career, ran his head against dramatic poetry, almost before he knew what was meant either by poetry or the drama; and

* Vol. viii. p. 329. Vol. xiii. p. 250.

dashed out a tragedy while but imperfectly acquainted with the language in which he was writing, and utterly ignorant either of the rules that had been delivered, or the models which had been created by the genius of his great predecessors. Had he been trained up from his early youth in fearful veneration for these rules and these models, it is certain that he would have resisted the impulse which led him to place himself, with so little preparation, within their danger; and most probable that he would never have thought himself qualified to answer the test they required of him. In giving way, however, to this propensity, with all the thoughtless freedom and vehemence which had characterised his other indulgences, he found himself suddenly embarked in an unexpected undertaking, and in sight of unexpected distinction. The success he had obtained with so little knowledge of the subject, tempted him to acquire what was wanting to deserve it, and justified hopes and stimulated exertions which earlier reflection would, in all probability, have for ever prevented.

The *morality* of Alfieri seems to have been at least as relaxed as that of the degenerate nobles whom in all other things he professed to reprobate and despise. He confesses, without the slightest appearance of contrition, that his general intercourse with women was profligate in the extreme; and has detailed the particulars of three several intrigues with married women, without once appearing to imagine that they could require any apology or expiation. On the contrary, while recording the deplorable consequences of one of them, he observes, with great composure, that it was distressing to him to contemplate a degradation, of which he had, "though innocently," been the occasion. The general arrogance of his manners, too, and the occasional brutality of his conduct towards his inferiors, are far from giving us an amiable impression of his general character; nor have we been able to find, in the whole of these confessions, a single trait of kindness of heart, or generous philanthropy, to place in the balance against so many indications of selfishness and violence. There are proofs enough, indeed, of a firm, elevated, and manly spirit; but small appearance of any thing gentle, or even, in a moral sense, of any thing very respectable. In his admiration, in short, of the worthies of antiquity, he appears to have copied their harshness and indelicacy at least as faithfully as their loftiness of character; and, at the same time, to have combined with it all the licentiousness and presumption of a modern Italian noble.

We have been somewhat perplexed with his politics. After speaking, as we have seen, of the mild government of the kings of Sardinia,—after adding, that, "when he had read Plutarch and visited England, he felt the most unsurmountable repugnance at marrying or having his children born at Turin,"—after recording, that a monarch is a master, and a subject a slave, —and "that he shed tears of mingled grief and rage at having been born in such a state as Piedmont;"—after all this—after giving up his estates to escape from this bondage, and after writing his books on the Tiranide, and his odes on American liberty,—we really were prepared to find him taking the popular side, at the outset, at least, of the French revolution, and exulting in the downfall of one of those hateful despotisms, against the whole system of which he had previously inveighed with no extraordinary moderation. Instead of this, however, we find him abusing the revolutionists and extolling their opponents, with all the zeal of a professed antijacobin —writing an eulogium on the dethroned monarch like Mr. Pybus, and a *Antigallican* like Peter Porcupine. Now, we are certainly very far fro

saying, that a true friend of liberty might not execrate the proceedings of the French revolutionists; but a professed hater of royalty might have felt more indulgence for the new republic; and such a crazy zealot for liberty as Alfieri showed himself in Italy, both by his writings and his conduct, might well have been carried away by that promise of emancipation to France, which deluded sounder heads than his in all the countries of Europe.—There are two keys, we think, in the work before us, to this apparent inconsistency. Alfieri, with all his abhorrence of tyrants, was, in his heart, a great lover of aristocracy; and he had a great spite and antipathy at the French nation, collectively and individually.

Though professedly a republican, it is easy to see that the republic he wanted was one on the Roman model,—where there were patricians as well as plebeians, and where a man of great talents had even a good chance of being one day appointed dictator. He did not admire kings, indeed,—because he did not happen to be born one, and because they were the only beings to whom he was born inferior; but he had the utmost veneration for nobles,—because fortune had placed him in that order, and because the power and distinction which belonged to it were agreeable to him, and, he thought, would be exercised for the good of his inferiors. When he heard that Voltaire had written a tragedy on the story of Brutus, he fell into a great passion, and exclaimed, that the subject was too lofty for "a French plebeian, who, during twenty years, had subscribed himself Gentleman in ordinary to the King!"

This love of aristocracy, however, will not explain the defence of monarchy and the abuse of republics, which formed the substance of his Antigallican. But the truth is, that he was antigallican from his youth up; and would never have forgiven that nation, if they had succeeded in establishing a free government,—especially while Italy was in bondage. The contempt which Voltaire had expressed for Italian literature, and the general degradation into which the national character had fallen, had sunk deep into his fierce and haughty spirit, and inspired him with an antipathy towards that people by whom his own countrymen had been subdued, ridiculed, and outshone. This paltry and vindictive feeling leads him, throughout this whole work, to speak of them in the most unjust and uncandid terms. There may be some truth in his remarks on the mean and meagre articulation of their language, and on their "horrible *u*, with their little lips drawn in to pronounce it, as if they were blowing hot soup." Nay, we could even excuse the nationality which leads him to declare, that "he would rather be the author of ten good Italian verses, than of volumes written in *English* or *French*, or any such harsh and unharmonious jargon,—though their cannon and their armies should continue to render these languages fashionable." But we cannot believe in the sincerity of an amorous Italian who declares that he never could get through the first volume of Rousseau's Heloïse; or of a modern author of regular dramas who professes to see nothing at all admirable in the tragedies of Racine or Voltaire. It is evident to us that he grudged these great writers the glory that was due to them, out of the vindictive feeling of national resentment; and that, for the same reason, he grudged the French nation the freedom, in which he would otherwise have been among the first to believe and to exult.

It only remains to say a word or two of the literary productions of this extraordinary person;—a theme, however interesting and attractive, upon which we can *scarcely pretend to* enter on the present occasion. We have

not yet been able to procure a complete copy of the works of Alfieri; even of those which have been lately transmitted to us, we will confess a considerable portion remains to be perused. We have seen enou however, to satisfy us that they are deserving of a careful analysis, and a free and enlightened estimate of their merit may be rendered both in resting and instructive to the greater part of our readers. We hope to be in a condition to attempt this task; and shall, in the mean time, confine ourselves to a very few observations suggested by the style and char ter of the tragedies with which we have been for some time acquainted

These pieces approach much nearer to the ancient Grecian model any other modern production with which we are acquainted, in simplicity of the plot, the fewness of the persons, the directness of action, and the uniformity and elaborate gravity of the composition. finitely less declamatory than the French tragedies, they have less brilli and variety, and a deeper tone of dignity and nature. As they have not ado the choral songs of the Greek stage, however, they are, on the whole, poetical than those ancient compositions; although they are wor throughout with a fine and careful hand, and diligently purified from ev thing ignoble or feeble in the expression. The author's anxiety to k clear of figures of mere ostentation, and to exclude all showpieces of writing in a dialogue of deep interest or impetuous passion, has betrayed h on some occasions, into too sententious and strained a diction, and gi an air of labour and heaviness to many parts of his composition. He felt, perhaps, a little too constantly, that the cardinal virtue of a dram writer is to keep his personages to the business and the concerns that before them; and by no means to let them turn to moral philosophers rhetorical describers of their own emotions. But, in his zealous adherenc this good maxim, he seems sometimes to have forgotten, that certain sions are declamatory in nature as well as on the stage; and that, at rate, they do not all vent themselves in concise and pithy sayings, but occasionally into hyperbole and amplification. As it is the great excelle so it is occasionally the chief fault, of Alfieri's dialogue, that every wor honestly employed to help forward the action of the play, in serious ar ment, necessary narrative, or the direct expression of natural emot There are no excursions or digressions,—no episodical conversations,— none but the most brief moralisings. This gives a certain air of solidit the whole structure of the piece, that is apt to prove oppressive to an o nary reader, and reduces the entire drama to too great uniformity.

We make these remarks chiefly with a reference to French tragedy. our own part, we believe that those who are duly sensible of the meri Shakspeare will never be much struck with any other dramatical composit There are no other plays, indeed, that paint human nature,—that strike the characters of men with all the freshness and sharpness of the origi —and speak the language of all the passions, not like a mimic, but an e —neither softer nor louder, nor differently modulated from the spontane utterance of the heart. In these respects he disdains all comparison w Alfieri, or with any other mortal; nor is it fair, perhaps, to suggest a co parison, where no rivalry can be imagined. Alfieri, like all the Contine dramatists, considers a tragedy as a poem. In England, we look upo rather as a representation of character and passion. With them, of cou the style and diction, and the congruity and proportions of the piece, are *main objects*: with us, the truth and the force of the imitation. It is

cient for them, if there be character and action enough to prevent the composition from languishing, and to give spirit and propriety to the polished dialogue of which it consists: we are satisfied, if there be management enough in the story not to shock credibility entirely, and beauty and polish enough in the diction to exclude disgust or derision. In his own way, Alfieri, we think, is excellent. His fables are all admirably contrived and completely developed; his dialogue is copious and progressive; and his characters all deliver natural sentiments with great beauty, and often with great force of expression. In our eyes, however, *it is* a fault that the fable is too simple, and the incidents too scanty; and that all the characters express themselves with equal felicity, and urge their opposite views and pretensions with equal skill and plausibility. We see at once that an ingenious author has versified the sum of a dialogue; and never for a moment imagine that we hear the real persons contending. There may be more eloquence and dignity in this style of dramatising;—there is infinitely more deception in ours.

With regard to the diction of these pieces, it is not for *tramontane* critics to presume to offer any opinion. They are considered in Italy, we believe, as the purest specimens of the *favella Toscana* that late ages have produced. To us they certainly seem to want something of that flow and sweetness to which we have been accustomed in Italian poetry, and to be formed rather upon the model of Dante than of Petrarca. At all events, it is obvious that the style is highly elaborate and artificial; and that the author is constantly striving to give it a sort of factitious force and energy, by the use of condensed and emphatic expressions, interrogatories, antitheses, and short and inverted sentences. In all these respects, as well as in the chastised gravity of the sentiments, and the temperance and propriety of all the delineations of passion, these pieces are exactly the reverse of what we should have expected from the fiery, fickle, and impatient character of the author. From all that Alfieri has told us of himself, we should have expected to find in his plays great vehemence and irregular eloquence—sublime and extravagant sentiments—passions rising to frenzy—and poetry swelling into bombast. Instead of this, we have a subdued and concise representation of energetic discourses—passions, not loud but deep—and a style so severely correct and scrupulously pure, as to indicate, even to unskilful eyes, the great labour which must have been bestowed on its purification. No characters can be more different than that which we should infer from reading the tragedies of Alfieri, and that which he has assigned to himself in these authentic memoirs.

MISS BAILLIE.*

It is now, we think, something more than nine years † since we first ventured to express our opinion of Miss Baillie's earlier productions; and to raise our warning voice against those narrow and peculiar views of dra-

* A Series of Plays: in which it is attempted to delineate the stronger Passions of the Mind By Joanna Baillie.—Vol. xix. p. 216. February, 1812.

† The article to which reference is here made, will be found in this work, amongst the Miscellaneous Essays on Poetry and the Drama, Vol. i. p. 264.

matic excellence, by which it appeared to us that she had impru increased the difficulties of a very difficult undertaking. Notwithsta this admonition, Miss Baillie has gone on (as we expected) in her own and has become (as we expected) both less popular and less deservi popularity in every successive publication. The volume before us, w afraid, is decidedly inferior to any of her former volumes; (for we too much forbearance, or nationality, to say any thing of her single pl at the same time that it contains indications of talent that ought not to overlooked, and specimens of excellence which make it a duty to exa into the causes of its general failure.

We have formerly said almost enough, we believe, of her extraordin determination to write a tragedy and a comedy upon each of the stron passions of the mind;—a scheme so singularly perverse and fantastic, t we rather wonder at its having escaped the patronage of the learned p fessors in the academy of Lagoda; and in favour of which it would not easy to say any thing—but that, by good luck, it is utterly impractica For, even passing over the captivating originality of comedies on Hat and Revenge, and tragedies on Hope and Joy, it seems plain enough, t the interest of a play can no more be maintained by the delineation of passion, than its dialogue and action can be supported by the exertion one character. It is of the very essence of dramatic composition, exhibit the play and contention of many and of opposite affections, only in the different persons it represents, but in the single bosom o hero; and its chief beauty and excellence consist in the variety of forms and colours that thus move over its living scenes—in the h monies and contrasts of the emotions which it successively displays— in the very multitude and diversity of the impressions to which it g birth. To substitute, for this, even the most careful and masterly lineation of any one emotion, would not only be to substitute so thing that was not dramatic for that which is the essence and excellence of the drama, but to replace this excellence by something n conspicuously inferior—to set before us the studied postures and oste tious anatomy of one unchanging academy figure, instead of the free ac and complicated exertions of groups engaged in athletic contention or rather, to turn our eyes from the innumerable shades of expres that animate the greater compositions of Raphael or the Caracci, to r them on the fantastic and exaggerated features of *one* of the Passion Le Brun.

If it be not this, however, that Miss Baillie aims at, then we must that we cannot discover that there is any thing in the least degree culiar or original in her system. The chief persons in every play m be actuated by certain passions; and by their influence the catastro must necessarily be brought about. In this sense, therefore, every p is a play on the passions, as much as any of those in the series be us; and all dramatic writers have proceeded upon the very system which Miss Baillie here claims the honours of a discovery. It depe indeed, entirely on the degree of simplicity in the plot, and of unity in action, as well as on the number of the persons represented, whether ruling passion of the principal characters shall be brought very conspicuou forward or not. Shakspeare, we believe, will be readily acquitted of petty larceny of stealing Miss Baillie's system of dramatising the passio and yet the Ambition of Macbeth, the Jealousy of Othello, and

Melancholy of Hamlet, contribute much more exclusively to the interest of those plays, than any of the passions represented by the writer before us can be said to do to the interest of the pieces she has produced as the first-fruits of that system. It may not be so easy, indeed, to specify the affections that are exhibited in many of the other plays of our great dramatist—in the Tempest, for example—in King Lear—in Julius Cæsar—in Cymbeline, or in Henry IV.; because the plot in all these pieces is more complicated, and the interest more divided. But there seems to be no reasonable ground for doubting that they were composed upon the very same system with the others; and that the interest which they excite depends upon the same general principles. The truth is, however, that common sense and vulgar possibility always appear tame and inglorious when compared with the splendid pretensions of theorists; and if Miss Baillie meant merely to announce, that she proposed to write plays that should be more like Macbeth and Othello than Cymbeline or the Tempest, the project must be allowed to be both innocent and laudable; and no blame can attach to her, except for the faults of the execution. In considering what are the chief of those faults, we are afraid, however, that it will be found that her system has had a worse effect than that of merely narrowing the field of her exertions.

There are two sorts of dramatic composition, or at least of tragedy, known in this country:—one, the old classical tragedy of the Grecian stage, modernised according to the French or Continental model: the other, the bold, free, irregular and miscellaneous drama of our own older writers,—or, to speak it more shortly and intelligibly, of Shakspeare. Miss Baillie, it appears to us, has attempted to unite the excellencies of both of these styles;—and has produced a combination of their defects.

The old Greek tragedy consisted of the representation of some one great, simple, and touching event, brought about by the agency of a very few persons, and detailed in grave, stately, and measured language, interspersed with choral songs and movements to music. In this primitive form of the drama, the story was commonly unfolded by means of a good deal of plain statement, direct enquiry, and detailed narration;—while the business was helped forward by means of short and pointed, though frequently very simple and obvious, argumentation,—and the interest maintained by pathetic exclamations, and reflections apparently artless and unostentatious. Such, we conceive, was the character of the ancient drama; upon the foundation of which, the French or Continental school appears obviously to have been built. The chief variations (besides the extinction of the Chorus) seem to be, first, that love has been made to supplant almost all the other passions,—and the tone, accordingly, has become less solemn and severe; secondly, that there is less simple narrative and enquiry, a great deal more argument or debate—every considerable scene, in fact, being now required to contain a complete and elaborate discussion, to which all the parties must come fully prepared to maintain their respective theses; and, thirdly, that the topics are drawn, in general, from more extended and philosophical views of human nature; and the state of the feelings set forth with more rhetorical amplification, and with a more anxious and copious minuteness. Notwithstanding those very important distinctions, however, we think ourselves justified in arranging the tragic drama of ancient Greece, and that of the continent of modern

Europe, as productions of the same school; because they will be found to agree in their main and characteristic attributes; because they both require the style and tone to be uniformly grave, lofty, and elaborate—the fable to be simple and direct—and the subject represented, to be weighty and important. Neither of them, consequently, admits of those minute touches of character, which give life and individuality to such delineations; and the interest, in both, rests either on the greatness of the action, and the general propriety and congruity of the sentiments by which it is accompanied—or on the beauty and completeness of the discussion—the poetical graces, the purity and elevation, of the language—and the accumulation of bright thoughts and happy expressions which are brought to bear upon the same subject.

Such, we believe, is the idea of dramatic excellence that prevails over the continent of Europe, and such the chief elements which are there admitted to compose it. In this country, however, we are fortunate enough to have a drama of a different description—a drama which aims at a far more exact imitation of nature, and admits of an appeal to a far greater variety of emotions—which requires less dignity or grandeur in its incidents, but deals them out with infinitely greater complication and profusion—which peoples its busy scenes with innumerable characters, and varies its style as freely as it multiplies its persons—which frequently remits the main action, and never exhausts any matter of controversy or discussion—indulges in flights of poetry too lofty for sober interlocutors, and sinks into occasional familiarities too homely for lofty representation—but, still pursuing nature and truth of character and of passion, is perpetually setting before us the express image of individuals whose reality it seems impossible to question, and the thrilling echo of emotions in which we are compelled to sympathise. In illustration of this style, it would be mere pedantry to refer to any other name than that of Shakspeare; who has undoubtedly furnished the most perfect as well as the most popular examples of its excellence; and who will be found to owe much of his unrivalled power over the attention, the imagination, and feelings of his readers, to the rich variety of his incidents and images, and to the inimitable truth and minuteness of his crowded characters.

Nothing, then, it appears, can be more radically different than the modern French and the old English tragedy. The one is the offspring of genius and original observation—the other of judgment and skill. The one aims at pleasing, chiefly by a faithful representation of nature, and character, and passion—the other by a display of poetical and elaborate beauties. The style of the latter, therefore, requires a continual elevation, and its characters a certain dignified uniformity, which are necessarily rejected by the former;—while our old English drama derives no small share of its interest from the rapidity and profusion of the incidents, and the multitude of the persons and images, which it brings before the fancy;—all which are excluded from the more solemn and artificial stage of our Continental neighbours.

To endeavour to effect a combination of two styles so radically different, must be allowed to have been rather a bold undertaking; but it appears to us to be no less certain that Miss Baillie has made the attempt, than that she has failed in it. What her object or intention was, indeed, we do not presume to conjecture: but the fact, we think, is undeniable, that she has united the familiar and irregular tone of our old drama, with the simple

plot, and the scanty allowance of incident, that are characteristic of the Continental stage; and has given us the homely style and trifling adventures of the one school, without its copiousness and variety—and the languor and uniformity of the other, without its elevation, dignity or polish. The events with which she is occupied, in short, are neither great nor many; and the style in which they are represented neither natural nor majestic. We do not think it uncharitable to say that this is a combination of defects only. The simple plot, the barrenness of incident, and the slowness of developement, which characterise the French drama, would evidently be insufferably heavy, if it were not redeemed by the greatness of the few events which it embraces, and by the uniform nobleness of the style, the weight and condensation of the sentiments, and the grace and elegance of the versification: while, on the other hand, the trifling incidents, the slovenly language, the vulgar characters, and the violent and incongruous images, which abound in our best home-made tragedies, would be still more intolerable, perhaps, to a correct taste, if ample compensation were not made by the richness and variety produced by this very abundance —by the lively and rapid succession of incidents—by the exquisite truth of the touches of character and passion, and the inimitable beauty of the occasional flights of poetry, that are so capriciously and often so unseasonably introduced. It was reserved for a writer of no ordinary talents to give us what was objectionable in each of these styles, without the compensations which naturally belonged to either;—and Miss Baillie, we think, has set the example of plays as poor in incident and character, and as sluggish in their pace, as any that languish on the Continental stage, without their grandeur, their elegance, or their interest; and at the same time as low and as irregular in their diction as our own early tragedies,—and certainly without their spirit, grace, or animation.

This, then, we think, is the chief defect in the plays of Miss Baillie;—and there are none of her readers, we believe, who have not been struck with the want of business in her scenes, and the extreme flatness and heaviness of all the subordinate parts of her performances. The events by which her story is developed are usually of a low and ordinary sort, and follow each other in a tame, slow, and awkward succession; while there is nothing either of richness, lightness, or vivacity in the general style, to conceal this penury in the more substantial elements of the composition. We travel through most of her performances, in short, with the same sort of feeling with which we travel through the dull stages of our own central highlands, —the feeling of getting on very slowly through scenes of uniform sterility —an impression which cannot be effaced by peeps of occasional sublimity, or reflections on the virtues of those who are said to delight in them.

This leading fault, we suppose, will be admitted by most even of Miss Baillie's admirers; but we do not reckon so securely on their acquiescence, when we add, that it appears to us that she has failed almost as signally in her delineation of character, as in the conception and conduct of her fable. The truth is, however, that she seems to us to want almost entirely the power of investing her characters with that air of individual reality, without which no very lively sympathy can ever be excited in the fortunes of the persons of the drama. She attempts to copy Shakspeare, indeed, in making her characters disclose themselves by slight incidental occurrences, and casual bursts of temper, in matters unconnected with the main story; but there is no spirit of originality either in the out-

line or in the touches by which it is thus sought to be animated; ar traits that are lent to it in this style of high pretension, are borrowe the most part, from the most obvious and commonplace accompanime their leading qualities : and though there was some merit, as well as boldness, in following Shakspeare so very closely, as to send her aml usurper, after the example of his Macbeth, to consult with witches in vern, we think it was any thing but ingenious or original to make a l tyrant swear outrageously at his servant for having mislaid his armou to intimate to us the playful and kindly nature of a distressed dams letting us know, in heavy blank verse, that she had stopped in the lol pat the head of a hound that came fawning to be caressed by her. great fault, however, of all her characters is, that they are evidently generalisations of a few obvious and familiar attributes—mere theor personages, compounded systematically out of a certain assemblage o: lities supposed to be striking or dramatic, without giving us the impr of there being any actual individual to whom they belong, and whose ence might be conceived as distinct from those qualities. This magica indeed, seems to have been possessed in its highest perfection by Shak alone; who, when he had once conjured up, from the vasty depths own boundless imagination, such potent spirits as Hotspur or Ha Mercutio or Falstaff, appears to have been actually haunted by their presence, and so fully impressed with a sense of their reality, as no to have seen without effort all that such persons could do or say business which they had been called up to perform, but actually to hav unable to confine them to that business, or to restrain them from foll out their characteristic impulses into all kinds of accidental and capr excesses. Miss Baillie, however, is in no danger of being thus overma by the phantoms of her own creation; who are so far from appear have a being independent of her control, or an activity which she c repress, that it is with difficulty that they get through the work wh set before them, or that the reader can conceive of them as any thin than the limited and necessary causes of the phenomena which they prc

This, however, is a fault by no means peculiar to Miss Baillie; an of which we should scarcely have thought ourselves bound to take an tice, if she had not insisted so largely upon the necessity of attendi the delineation of character, and brought forward the traits of her ow way so obtrusive, as to show very plainly that she thought her pretei in this department proof against any sort of scrutiny. For the same re we think it our duty to say, further, that besides this want of the tal giving individuality to her scenic personages, it appears to us that really disqualified from representing the higher characters of the drama, by an obvious want of sympathy or admiration for such chara Every reader of plays, and indeed of poetry, or works of imagination neral, must have observed, that there were certain characters, or qu of mind, which were favourites with each particular author, and in t lineation of which he was consequently peculiarly spirited and succ Even the universal Shakspeare, to whom the observation is infinitel applicable than to any other mortal, obviously luxuriates most in his sentation of original humour and comic eccentricity. Otway has a d predilection for scenes of tenderness and pathos—Beaumont and Fl for romantic extravagance of love or bravery—Milton for austere an morality—and Dryden for pomp and magnificence. Each of these a

has, accordingly, succeeded eminently only in those characters to which they were most partial;—and scarcely any of them (except the first) has produced any striking delineation of an opposite character. Now, Miss Baillie has her favourite character also; and one which, though it do infinite credit to her judgment and feeling as an individual, happens unfortunately to be, of all others, perhaps the very worst adapted for dramatic or tragic representation. It is impossible, we think, to read any one of her plays, without feeling that the character which Miss Baillie thinks (and with great reason) the most amiable and engaging of all others, is that of cheerful good sense, united to calm, equable, and indulgent affections,—the character, in short, of rationality and habitual benevolence;—of which we think it must be admitted that, whatever precedence it may claim over more brilliant qualifications in real life, it is just as ill fitted to give spirit and effect to the fictions of the drama, as the qualities that shine most there are to soothe the moments of domestic privacy.

Every one of Miss Baillie's amiable characters, however, both male and female, leans visibly to this class of virtues. They are all marvellously dutiful and affectionate towards their near relations, and careful of the comforts of their servants and immediate dependants. They are laudably tolerant, too, of bad jokes proceeding from good hearts; and live in the practice of a sort of innocent gibing and good-natured raillery, which shows their disposition to be merry, and does no harm to any body. They are considerable despisers, moreover, of power and glory, and the other splendid illusions to which the less sober part of mankind are in the habit of sacrificing their happiness,—and much disposed to console themselves for the want of those turbulent enjoyments, by the solid comforts of content and a good conscience. Now, it is plain enough, we suppose, that these respectable and well-disposed persons are not very likely to excite a great interest by their appearances in tragedy: both on account of the very homeliness of their virtues, and of their not being at all the sort of persons either to perform the actions or to experience the emotions upon which the effect of that kind of moral tale is commonly thought to depend.

The fact is, however, that they are equally unfit for comedy; and it is chiefly to the excess of her very laudable predilection for them, that we are to ascribe Miss Baillie's uniform and admitted failure in this department of the drama. All her amiable personages are too reasonable, prudent, and placable, to excite any greast interest or anxiety in their behalf; and the unamiable ones are little more than unreasonable, or ill-tempered—without ceasing to be tolerably sensible, and nearly as plain in their speech, and as sagacious in pursuit of their objects, as their more unexceptionable associates. The truth is, however, that Miss Baillie has no talent for writing comedy: she does not appear to us to comprehend in what the *vis comica* consists, or to have an idea that there ought to be amusing passages in a work intended for amusement: she has no gift, certainly, in devising or unfolding a story; and here her personages all go through their parts in such a sober and business-like manner,—there is so little of extravagance in any one character —so little spontaneous wit or discursive humour—such an entire absence, in short, of brilliant or ornamental writing, that one would almost imagine that she held the laws of good taste to be the same for a comedy as for a sermon;—nor could we have at all explained the phenomenon of her continual failure, if we had not recollected her constant and excessive partiality for the moderately cheerful and very reasonable persons we have just alluded to,—out

of love and deference for whom she seems to have settled it with herself that the gaiety of comedy should never rise above the tone of good-humoured conversation among plain and ordinary people; and should never be pursued any farther than such worthy persons are in the practice of letting their jokes carry them from their business. The brilliancy and extravagance of fancy that fascinate more frivolous beings, appear to her, we have no doubt, very fatiguing and unprofitable,—and we are afraid that she may even look upon the amplifications of Falstaff and the sallies of Mercutio or Benedict as mere raving and folly, and on the turns and repartees of Congreve and Sheridan as impertinent interruptions to the business of the play. It is certain, at least, that her comedies show a great deal of good sense, and a plentiful lack of wit; and we think we adopt a most charitable theory, when we ascribe to her predilection for that substantial quality, their deficiency in a more appropriate ornament.

The *passions*, as to what relates to the drama, really are not very distinguishable from the characters; and the most of what we have now said as to the latter, is applicable therefore to them also. We must observe, however, that, in her later works especially, Miss Baillie has presented us rather with a theoretical amplification of the progress of a passion in general, than with its natural expression in the character of any one individual. The elaborate purpose of tracing it through all its gradations, and investing it with all its attributes, is by far too manifest throughout. Our attention, in short, is directed more to its anatomy than to its living action; and we rise from the perusal, even of her most successful attempts, with a consciousness rather of having been instructed in the nature of the passion in question, than of having witnessed its natural operation, or been made to sympathise with its victims.

We come now to the last chapter of this fair writer's offences, or those which relate to the matter of style and diction; which we are concerned to say, appears to us the heaviest of the whole; not, however, so much because her taste is bad, as because her stock is deplorably scanty. Almost all the words she has, she has borrowed from our old dramatists; but her credit with them seems to have been so limited, that her debt is incredibly small; and the leading character of her style, therefore, is a poorness and narrowness of diction altogether without example, we think, in this voluble age,—and only rendered more conspicuous by the constrained and unnatural air produced by her affectation of antiquated phraseology, and the contrast which this affords to the carelessness, copiousness, and freedom of the true old style, which is thus brought to our recollection. She seems to have no ear for the melody of blank verse,—and especially of that easy and colloquial verse which is alone suited to the purposes of the drama;—while her words continually remind us of Shakspeare, or Beaumont and Fletcher, it is impossible to imagine any thing so utterly opposite as the richness, lightness, and flexibility of their style, and the poverty and cumbrousness of hers—except, perhaps, the heavy, lifeless, and unwieldy structure of her verses, when compared with the light and capricious undulations of theirs.

We do not see much merit in using an antiquated diction on any occasion,—and least of all in the drama,—where the great object is to copy living nature to the satisfaction of living judges. Whatever beauty such a style may possess, however, must obviously be derived from its tendency to remind us of the *beauties* of those memorable authors who wrote in it before it had acquired the character of antiquity; and the first rule for the

be of it should therefore be, that it should be the style of their beautiful assages; and that no old word should be admitted in a modern poem, hich does not hold a conspicuous station in some admired verse of an anient one. But, though even our milliners have sense enough to copy only Queen Mary's cap, or Queen Elizabeth's ruff, and not their tremendous tays, or their stockings of woollen cloth, our literary artisans have not yet attained to the same degree of discrimination. The Spectator takes notice, we think, of a play which professed, in his day, to be written in the very style of Shakspeare, upon the strength of its containing this line—"and so good morrow to you, good master lieutenant:" and the public, in our own time, very nearly swallowed an incredible quantity of trash, under the name of the same great author, upon no other inducement, that we could discover, than that all the words were spelled with a double allowance of consonants. Miss Baillie has not gone quite so far as this; but she has sinned perpetually against the canon which we have presumed to lay down for the legitimate use of an obsolete phraseology: she has not copied any of Shakspeare's fine expressions; and has almost always used the style of his age, only where it was less dignified and less intelligible than that of her own. A noble knight, for instance, instead of saying that a painful recollection wounds him deeply, always takes care to say, "In faith, it galls me shrewdly;"—and another wishes his adversary's conscience, in like manner, "to gnaw him shrewdly." Then all the personages are uniformly "full glad," and "full sorry," and "full well," and "full ready;"—and all the coats, hats, and armour in the volume (which, by the way, pass under the elegant appellation of geer) are invariably "doffed" and "donned" by their wearers;—and the author's good simple people generally "trow" what other people believe; and those who are reprimanded or checked are still said to be "shent." We took the liberty to rebuke Miss Baillie, on a former occasion, for the frequent use of this paltry and affected word; but, in spite of all our pains, we have it here again in the very first play in the volume—where, by way of apology for its re-appearance, we find it used by one noble baron who likens another to "a shent cur" barking at its master's door!

What makes all this the more lamentable is, that Miss Baillie is very obviously by no means an expert or learned archaiologist; and not only uses these and such like very scurvy and sore-worn fragments of old speech incorrectly and injudiciously, but mixes them up, in a most unseemly manner, with the meanest and most unpoetical neologisms. The same chieftain who is "shrewdly galled" in one page, talks of "sombre banishment" in the next; and after bidding "God wot" that he was aware of his son's defects, immediately observes, that

> ——————"ne'ertheless
> He still has parts and talents; though obscured
> By some untoward failings."

And a fair lady, who has been speaking of "geer," and "clutching," and "harness," and "torn hose," presently exclaims, in the most business-like and peremptory manner, that,

> "In short, she would, without another's leave,
> Improve the low condition of her peasants."

It is needless, however, to multiply examples of this low and discordant style at present; because this and all its other peculiarities will be more copiously and fairly illustrated by the specimens which we may be induced,

for other purposes, to extract from the volume before us. But we cannot leave even this general view of the subject without observing, that, either from mere want of words, or from a strange misconception of the style and licence of our older writers, Miss Baillie has indulged herself very frequently in a manner of writing that could not have been endured at any period, and of which it may be fairly said, that it is neither verse nor language at all. She has a habit, in particular, of transposing the substantive and auxiliary verbs in a way that is exceedingly distressing; and certainly would not be tolerated in a schoolboy's first copy of English verses. The reader may conjecture what effect it has on the general air of her composition when he is informed, that the following instances of it have forced themselves on our notice, in turning over the leaves of the first play in this volume for a very different purpose:—

"Full well I know why thou so merry *art*."

———"Thou wrong'st me much
To think my merriment a reference *hath*."

———"All thy sex
Stubborn and headstrong *are*."

"Here is a place in which some traces *are*

"To whom
Hosts of the earth, with the departed dead
Subjected *are*"

"That to the awful steps that tread upon you
Unconscious *are*."

"The living and the dead together *are*."

"Fell is the stroke, if mercy in it *be*."

The effect of these "most lame and impotent conclusions" on the melody of the verse, is scarcely less deplorable than their cruel operation on the sense; but the truth is, that the melody of Miss Baillie's blank verse is not to be hurt by trifles—there being nothing in the whole range of modern poetry half so clumsy and untuneful as the greater part of her unrhymed versification.

We will not, however, pursue the ungrateful theme of her faults any farther; but, before closing this hasty and unintended sketch of her poetical character, shall add a word or two, as both duty and inclination prompt us to do, on the more pleasing subject of her merits. And here we must give the first place, we believe, to the tone of good sense and amiable feeling which pervades every part of her performances; and which, wherever they are found to be habitual and unaffected, impart a charm, even to poetical compositions, which compensates for the want of many more splendid attributes. Miss Baillie is not only very moral, and intelligently moral; but there is, in all her writings, a character of indulgent and vigilant affection for her species, and of a goodness that is both magnanimous and practical, which we do not know that we have traced, in the same degree, in the compositions of any other writer. Then she has a very considerable knowledge of human nature, and an uncommon talent of representing (though not in the best dramatical form) the peculiar symptoms and natural developement of various passions; so that her plays may always be read with a *certain degree of instruction*,—and cannot be read without feelings of great

espect for the penetration and sagacity of their author. Even as to style nd diction, while we lament both the poverty and the constraint of which re have been compelled to take notice, it is but fair to say, that Miss Baillie ppears to us to have good taste enough to keep her eye pretty constantly on he best models; and that even her poverty has not been able to seduce her nto those flowery paths, where the poorest, if they are regardless of purity, ay, with small labour, become as rich, or at least as gaudy, as their eighbours. Finally, we think Miss Baillie entitled to very high and mingled praise, for the beauty of many detached passages in every one of er metrical compositions;—passages that possess many of the higher ualities of fine and original poetry; and which, if they were only a little onger, and a little more numerous, would entitle her to take her place on level with the most distinguished names that have illustrated this age f poetry. Few and far between as they are, they are decisive, we think, f her genius and capacity; and though we do not think they are in danger f being lost and forgotten amidst the mass of baser matter with which ey are now surrounded, they make it a duty in all who are aware of heir value, to unite their efforts both for their rescue and their multiplication.

JAMES GRAHAME.*

We have no great predilection, we must say, for didactic poetry of any ort,—at least, where it corresponds with its title, and really aims at teaching; and though there are several pieces that have obtained much merited elebrity under that title, we suspect that it has been earned by the passages which it was least applicable. Some have pleased by the liveliness and eauty of the descriptions which they contained; others by the exquisite olish and elegance of the composition; and the greater part, perhaps, by eir episodes and digressions. Who reads the precepts of Hesiod, or the rguments of Lucretius?—or even the maxims about sowing and reaping in irgil, or the theory of laughter and of general ideas in Akenside?

The poem before us, we fear, will not take away this reproach of the idactic Muse; and may, indeed, be divided, more certainly and commodiusly than most of its family, into the two great compartments of the legible nd the illegible. The agricultural precepts, which are as dull and prosaic s any precepts we ever met with, fortunately are not very intimately ixed up with the descriptive and poetical passages; and those, which are ften of great beauty and pathos, are generally so detached and complete n themselves, that they might have stood as well in any other work which reated of rural life and rural scenery; and may be perfectly relished and nderstood by those who are wicked enough to skip over all the agricultural arning of the volume.

Though "Georgics" may be, as Mr. Grahame assures us, the proper ppellation for all treatises of husbandry in verse, the "Scottish Farmer's alendar" would have been a title more descriptive of the plan and subance of the work before us. Not only is the whole scenery borrowed

* Grahame's British Georgics.—Vol. xvi. p. 213. April, 1810

from this end of the island, but the poem is divided into twelve parts
sections, arranged in the order, and under the names of the twelve mon
of the year, and containing full directions for all farm-work proper to ea
month respectively, as well as some fine descriptions of the successive a
pearances of the country, and the condition of its inhabitants; together wi
many little episodes and reflections arising out of these considerations.

In thus putting the whole year into blank verse, it was evidently next
impossible to avoid clashing with the author of the Seasons;—and tho
accordingly, who are jealous of Thomson's original invention, will fi
frequent occasion to complain of the author before us. At the same time, th
are many points in which we think his merits must be admitted by all lov
of poetry, and his originality confessed by the warmest admirers of Thom
The singular fidelity and clearness of his descriptions, prove him to h
studied all his pictures for himself, in nature;—a certain simplicity
thought, and softness of heart, give a peculiar character to his manner, t
excludes all idea of imitation; and his fine and discriminating pictures
the Scottish landscape, and the Scottish peasantry, are as new in their su
ject, as they are excellent in the execution.

There is something irresistibly pleasing in the faithful representation
external nature, even in her simplest and most ordinary aspects. All m
have interesting associations with dawnings and sunsets:—and the returns
summer and winter, as they indicate themselves upon the woods and wate
the mountains and fields of our home scenery, recall to every bosom
thousand impressions, more deep and touching than can usually be excit
by objects far more new and extraordinary. A lively picture of natu
therefore, pleases everybody—and is the only thing, perhaps, that does
Nor are we very apt, while we feel indebted to the artist for a clear
striking conception, to blame him for having painted what is common,
even what had been often painted before. If a descriptive poet makes
feel distinctly that he is copying nature, and not from his predecessors,
excuse a good deal of coincidence, and really receive a new impression fr
a new portrait of the same grand original.

Mr. Grahame's descriptions appear to us to be remarkable for their gre
fidelity, minuteness, and brevity,—for the singular simplicity and direct
with which they are brought out,—and for a kind of artless earnestnes
the manner of their execution, which shows the author to have been e
tirely occupied with the care of rendering faithfully and exactly what
present to his eye or his memory. There is no ambition to be fin
striking,—and no great concern, apparently, about the distant effect or i
perfection of his landscape,—but an honest determination and endeavou
give his readers precisely what was before him,—and to communicate fa
fully to them what had actually made an impression on himself. In this wa
he seldom thinks it necessary to call in the aid of exaggeration, or to inv
any picturesque or extraordinary circumstances to bespeak an interest
his delineations; but presents his scenes successively in all their nati
plainness and simplicity,—noting down all the features that really occur
them, without concerning himself whether other poets have represent
them or not,—and stopping when these are exhausted, however abrupt
imperfect the composition may consequently appear. The effect of this pl
of writing is, that his descriptions are almost always strong and impressiv
and present the most distinct and vivid images to the fancy; although th
are not often heightened by any great glow of genius or animation, and a

ently broken and irregular, or deficient in that keeping which may
und in the works of those who write more from the love of the art than
subject.

e great charm, however, of Mr. Grahame's poetry, appears to us to
t in its moral character,—in that natural expression of kindness and
rness of heart, which gives such a peculiar air of paternal goodness and
archal simplicity to his writings,—and that earnest and intimate sym-
with the objects of his compassion, which assures us at once that he
t making a theatrical display of sensibility, but merely giving vent to
miliar sentiments of his bosom. We can trace here, in short, and
the same pleasing effect, that entire absence of art, effort, and
tation, which we have already noticed as the most remarkable distinc-
of his attempts in description. Almost all the other poets with whom
re acquainted, appear but too obviously to put their feelings and affec-
, as well as their fancies and phrases, into a sort of studied dress,
re they venture to present them to the crowded assembly of the public:
though the style and fashion of this dress varies according to the taste
ability of the inventors, still it serves almost equally to hide their native
portions, and to prove that they were a little ashamed or afraid to exhibit
n as they really were. The greater part of those who have aimed at
ucing a pathetic effect, have attempted to raise and exalt both the cha-
ers of their personages and the language in which they are spoken of;
thus to seek an excuse, as it were, for their sensibility in the illusions
ulgar admiration; others have aggravated the distresses with strange
incredible complications,—that it might appear that they did not disturb
selves on light and ordinary grounds: and some few have dressed out
themselves and their heroes in such a tissue of whimsical and capri-
affectations, that they are still less in danger than their neighbours of
suspected of indulging in the vulgar sympathies of our nature. Now,
Grahame, we think, has got over this general nervousness and shyness
showing the natural and simple feelings with which the contemplation
uman emotion should affect us—or rather, has been too seriously occu-
, and too constantly engrossed with the feelings themselves, to think
the confession of them might be taken by the generality of his readers,
ncern himself about the contempt of the fastidious, or the derision of
nfeeling. In his poetry, therefore, we meet neither with the Musi-
s and Damons of Thomson, nor the gipsy-women and Ellen Orfords of
be; and still less with the Matthew Schoolmasters, Alice Fells, or
the Raes of Mr. Wordsworth;—but we meet with the ordinary peasants
otland in their ordinary situations, and with a touching and simple
ession of concern for their sufferings, and of generous indulgence for
faults. He is not ashamed of his kindness and condescension, on the
hand; nor is he ostentatious or vain of it, on the other—but gives
ession in the most plain and unaffected manner to sentiments that are
er counterfeited nor disguised. We do not know any poetry, indeed,
lets us in so directly to the heart of the writer, and produces so full
pleasing a conviction that it is dictated by the genuine feelings which it
at communicating to the reader. If there be less fire and elevation
in the strains of some of his contemporaries, there is more truth and
rness than is commonly found along with those qualities, and less
ng up either of language or of sentiment than we recollect to have met
in any modern composition.

The last peculiarity by which Mr. Grahame's poetry is recommended us, is one which we hesitate a little about naming to our English readers: to be candid with them, however, it is his great nationality. We do l him in our hearts, we are afraid, for speaking so affectionately of Scotla But, independent of this partial bias, we must say, that the exquisitely c rect pictures which he has drawn of Scottish rustics, and of Scottish ru scenery, have a merit, which even English critics would not think wel overrated if they were as well qualified as we are to judge of their fideli We will add, too, in spite of the imputations to which it may expose us, t the rustics of Scotland are a far more interesting race, and far fitter subje for poetry, than their brethren of the same condition in the South. Th are much more thoughtful, pious, and intelligent—have more delicacy their affections, and more reflecting, patient, and serious kindness in th natures. To say all in a word, they are far less *brutish* than the great bo of the English peasantry. At the same time, from being poorer and mo lonely, their characters and way of life are more truly simple, while t very want of comfort and accommodation with which they are sometim surrounded, holds more of the antique age, and connects them more clos with those primitive times, with the customs and even the history of whi they are still so generally familiar. The Scottish landscape, too, we ma be pardoned for thinking, is better suited for poetical purposes than the pr vailing scenery of England. Its great extent and openness—the slight shad of dreariness that is commonly thrown over both its beauty and its sublimi —and the air of wildness and antiquity which it derives from its rocky hil and unploughed valleys,—possess a charm, both to the natives and t strangers, that leads far more readily to poetical associations than the fertil fields and snug villages of the South.

DELILLE.*

It is now upwards of twenty years since the poem of "Les Jardins" be gan to be read out of France; and, in the course of that time, it has bee translated into almost all the languages of Europe, and been made the sub ject of criticism and imitation from Warsaw to Naples. A reputation tha prevails so universally, and is retained so long, must necessarily be merited and it would not only be presumptuous, but absurd, to call in question th reality of those excellences, to which the whole European world has born so unequivocal a testimony. We may be permitted, however, to enquire little into the peculiar nature of those merits which have met with so gener approbation; and to consider whether they are not attended with any cha racteristic defects.

It probably will not appear very flattering to a French writer, or to h French admirers, to say, that Delille has extended his reputation, chiefl by abandoning his national peculiarities, and added materially to the beau of his compositions, by accommodating them to the taste of his neighbour Yet such, it appears to us, is undoubtedly the case with M. Delille. H has recommended his works to general perusal, by departing, in a gre

* Le Malheur et la Pitié: Poème en Quatre Chants.—Vol. iii. p. 26. October, 1803.

easure, from the common poetical style of his countrymen; by adopting, reely, the beauties of the surrounding countries, and forming himself upon he model of all that appeared to him to be excellent in the poetry of modern Europe. French poetry, we are inclined to suspect, never had any very incere admirers out of France. The general diffusion of the language of that people, the excellence of many of their writings, and their early proficiency in criticism and the *belles lettres*, had indeed given a certain currency to most of their domestic favourites, and spread into the circulation of Europe, whatever had received the stamp of Parisian approbation. But their reception was more owing to the authority by which they were recommended, than to their own powers of universal fascination. Men wished to admire the poems of those whose prose was in general so delightful; and seldom had courage to set up their own judgment in opposition to the sentence of a tribunal that was, for the most part, so enlightened. French poetry was read, therefore, and applauded over all Europe, without being sincerely admired. Some pretended to be enchanted with it, and others imagined that they were so; while all the men of letters spoke of it with deference, and condemned, without mercy, all that resembled it in the productions of their own countrymen. Although a poet who had obtained reputation in France was not sure, therefore, of pleasing all the rest of Europe, he came before his foreign readers with very considerable advantages. He was certain of being patiently and favourably listened to, and might assure himself, that many would applaud, and that the greater part would be willing to admire. As soon, therefore, as a French poet appeared, who was willing to lay aside the gaudy *costume* of his country, and to accommodate himself to the taste of the other European nations, it was to be expected that his popularity would be at least equal to his merits. It was reserved for M. Delille to make this experiment; and we are really persuaded that a very great share of his reputation is to be ascribed to its success.

It is chiefly from the modern poets of England, that M. Delille has borrowed the peculiarities of his manner. Besides the obvious and avowed imitations of Pope, Addison, Goldsmith, Cowper, and Darwin, that occur in the present publication, there is something in the whole temper and complexion of his compositions, that certainly does not belong to the genuine school of French poetry. The prose of Rousseau and of Florian may have afforded some instances of it: but if it had a poetical origin, it must have been borrowed from the poetry of England. The great vice of the French poets was an affected magnificence of diction, and elevation of sentiment, that admitted of no relaxation, and precluded, in a great degree, all that was interesting or natural. The charm of easy and powerful expression was generally sacrificed to the support of a certain sonorous and empty dignity; the picturesque effect of individual description was lost in cold generalities; character was effaced, by the prevalence of one glittering uniform; and high-sounding *sentiments* were substituted for the language of nature and passion. In this way, almost all the serious poetry of France had come to resemble the declamation of a hired pleader, in which no imitation of nature was so much as attempted; but all kinds of reflections and antitheses were thrown together in a style of affected passion and false elevation. Every English reader, we apprehend, must have felt how little painting there is in the poetry of France, and how much more it deals in thoughts than in images. It is full *of reasoning* and ingenuity, and abounds in all the

graces of polite and elegant expression; but there is little that comes distinctly forward to the imagination or the heart; and we are never tempted for a moment, to believe in the inspiration of the author.

M. Delille has corrected a great number of these defects, and divested the poetry of his country of a great deal of that artificial stateliness which was so fatal to its pathetic effect. Instead of vague and lofty declamation he has presented his readers with minute and faithful descriptions of all that was interesting in his subjects; and has impressed them with the feeling he was desirous of communicating, not by running over all the verbs and interjections that were supposed to denote them, but by placing before the eyes a living picture of the situations in which they must arise. In another particular, too, M. Delille may be considered as an innovator in French poetry, and a follower of the English writers. He is the first, we believe, in that country, who has succeeded in embellishing his compositions with representations of rustic scenery, and rustic virtues and occupations. His predecessors spoke, indeed, of groves and fountains, and paraded the muses, as of old, among thickets and upon lawns; but they spoke of them as they did of the tigers and lions which were found in their company in the writers of antiquity, and neither pretended to detain their readers among them, nor to delineate them with the fullness and precision of realities. M. Delille has made them familiar, however, with cottages and farms, and rendered current in verse the whole phraseology of planting and enclosing. He has dwelt, with great feeling and effect, upon the contemplative and innocent pleasures that a rural situation may afford, and has contrived to describe them in language so pure and so elegant, that even the Parisians have perused them without derision or disgust. He has not only ventured to speak of the country, but has had the courage to take an interest in its inhabitants. The older French poets were utterly unacquainted with cottagers and husbandmen. Their only rustic personages were shepherds and shepherdesses, who asked for nothing but sympathy, and laboured at nothing but singing. M. Delille has introduced the real peasant and labourer to the acquaintance of his readers; has represented their occupations, their pleasures, and their virtues; and has solicited relief for their sufferings, and respect for their services. All this is familiar to English poetry; but it was new to that of France.

M. Delille, finally, is a much greater philanthropist than any of his predecessors we remember; and betrays, throughout, a sort of sentimental tenderness, and delicacy of feeling, that did not enter before into our conception of a French poet. His morality is perfectly pure; and there is not a page in his writings, in which he does not labour to enforce it. There is no poetry with which we are acquainted, indeed, that is so uniformly and zealously moral.

But though, in these and some other particulars, M. Delille bears a much greater resemblance to the poets of England, than to those of his own country, we must not imagine, by any means, that he has entirely renounced his national taste, or conducted himself in every thing according to our notions of propriety. Nor are we, on the other hand, to conceive that M. Delille is a writer of a warm and enthusiastic imagination, who has been hurried into a disregard of his national models by the impulse of a bold and creative imagination, or from any ardour of temperament that disdained the control of authority. He is, in truth, a great deal more distinguished for *correctness* and delicacy of taste, than for original or inventive genius; and

hile he has done us the honour of preferring our authors to his own, he s not copied anything that could not be justified by classical usage, or the ost rigorous canons of criticism. He has prudently abstained, therefore, m attempting to imitate those higher graces of composition, which no itator is ever permitted to attain; and has confined himself to those ac- plishments of fine writing that may always be reached by the union of gant taste and diligent application. Although most of his writings, there- , recall to us the general manner of English poetry, we shall be but lom reminded of the loftier flights of Milton, the luxuriant tenderness of mson, or the fairy fancy and magical facility of Shakspeare. We shall more of the pointed polish and elaborate elegance of Pope, the dignified correct tenderness of Goldsmith, and the dazzling amplifications of win. M. Delille, in short, is a refined, studied, polite, and accom- ed writer, who never forgets himself in the ardour of composition, and lom lets the reader forget him; who culls out the nicest phrases, and unexceptionable images; and oftener reminds us that the description autiful, than he imposes upon us with the belief of its reality. He be- s to that class of poets that may be said to be of *secondary formation*, that could not have existed if a hardier race had not existed before them. e does not wander in the pathless places of Parnassus, nor gather flowers ere no poetical foot had ever trodden before him. He has the praise of icious selection, artful disposition, and dignified imitation. He has ched the eminence upon which he stands, by following with attention the steps of those who have mounted still higher. He has become a poet by ing and patient discipline; and probably could not have written "Les rdins," if he had not begun with a translation of Virgil.

The subject of M. Delille's poems does not naturally carry him into the gher regions of poetry, and he does not seek for occasions of elevation. e art of laying out pleasure-grounds, and of passing one's time agreeably the country, might be discussed, no doubt, without trespassing on the vinces of the epic or the tragic writer; but admitted, at the same time, a great deal of pathetic imagery, and a great variety of embellishment. would be improper to enter upon any particular criticism of these poems, this place; but there is one remark suggested by them, which applies so viously to the general character of M. Delille's genius, that no apology be necessary for its insertion. The great part of the pleasure derived m poetical representations of rustic scenery and occupations, consists in easing illusion of the imagination, that carries us back to the golden age the poets, and soothes us into a temporary forgetfulness of all the vice d the artifice, the cares and perplexities, of real life. There is some pe- d in every man's life, in which he has fancied that happiness and inno- nce were to be found among cottages and pastures, and desired to retire m the bustle and corruptions of the world, to some elegant and simple clusion; and, as often as spleen or disappointment turn back his thoughts this vision of his childhood, the dissipation and constraint of a city life ways present themselves as objects of scorn and detestation. Whatever nds, therefore, to recall our thoughts to those incongruous objects, is mis- ced in such a poem; it dispels the illusion, by the help of which alone ch themes are capable of pleasing, and distracts the imagination from the in of images that engrossed it. Now, this fault, which is not chargeable her upon Virgil or Thomson, M. Delille has certainly committed. He gins his encomium on a country life, with some critical remarks on the

regulation of private theatres, and entertains his readers with a long enu meration of pompous villas, and great princes that inhabit them. He constantly interspersing sarcastic and pointed reflections upon the dissipat and luxurious, and has composed the greater part of his poem in such epigrammatic and courtly style, as is altogether unsuitable to the subject upon which he is employed. Although enamoured of rural objects and em ployments, he seems anxious to convince his courtly readers, that he is familiar as can be with the language and occupations of the polite worl and that, though he chooses to show his sensibility to obscure and sentimen pleasures, he possesses all the urbanity and accomplishments of a gentlem and a courtier. His whole style is infected with this peculiarity; he cann avoid an ingenious turn, or a brilliant antithesis; and instead of the simp and enthusiastic votary of nature and virtue, he frequently appears like fine gentleman paying compliments to the sylvan goddesses.

Upon the whole, we think that the genius of M. Delille is rather of pleasing than of a powerful character; and that the delicacy of his taste, an the elegance of his language, are a good deal more remarkable than the for of his imagination, or the originality of his invention. He will be relish most, we conceive, by those who admire rather the art, than the nature, o poetry; and though he will give delight to almost all who have been trai to the admiration of elegance, by the habitual study of fine writers, he w scarcely ever be found speaking in that universal language, by the use which Shakspeare has found his way from the closet of the student int the workshops of our manufacturers, and the cottages of our peasantry.

BURNS. (No. 1.)*

Burns is certainly by far the greatest of our poetical prodigies—from Stephen Duck down to Thomas Dermody. *They* are forgotten already; or only remembered for derision. But the name of Burns, if we are no mistaken, has not yet "gathered all its fame;" and will endure long after those circumstances are forgotten which contributed to its first notoriety. So much, indeed, are we impressed with a sense of his merits, that we cannot help thinking it a derogation from them to consider him as a prodig at all; and are convinced that he will never be rightly estimated as a poe till that vulgar wonder be entirely repressed which was raised on his having been a ploughman. It is true, no doubt, that he was born in an humbl station, and that much of his early life was devoted to severe labour, an to the society of his fellow-labourers. But he was not himself either un educated or illiterate; and was placed perhaps in a situation more favou able to the developement of great poetical talents, than any other whi could have been assigned him. He was taught, at a very early age, to rea and write; and soon after acquired a competent knowledge of Frenc together with the elements of Latin and Geometry. His taste for readi was encouraged by his parents and many of his associates; and, before h had ever composed a single stanza, he was not only familiar with man prose writers, but far more intimately acquainted with Pope, Shakspear

* Cromek's Reliques of Burns.—Vol. xiii. p. 242. January, 1809.

homson, than nine-tenths of the youth that leave school for the uni-
. These authors, indeed, with some old collections of songs, and
es of Hannibal and of Sir William Wallace, were his habitual study
he first days of his childhood; and, co-operating with the solitude of
ıral occupations, were sufficient to rouse his ardent and ambitious
to the love and the practice of poetry. He had as much scholarship,
agine, as Shakspeare, and far better models to form his ear to har-
, and train his fancy to graceful invention.

ventured, on a former occasion,* to say something of the effects of
r education, and of the general diffusion of literature, in repressing
gour and originality of all kinds of mental exertion. That speculation
erhaps carried somewhat too far; but if the paradox have proof any
, it is in its application to poetry. Among well-educated people, the
ırd writers of this description are at once so venerated and so familiar,
is thought equally impossible to rival them, and to write verses with-
tempting it. If there be one degree of fame which excites emulation,
is another which leads to despair; nor can we conceive any one less
to add one to the short list of original poets, than a young man of fine
and delicate taste, who has acquired a high relish for poetry, by
ing the most celebrated writers, and conversing with the most intel-
judges. The head of such a person is filled, of course, with all the
lid passages of ancient and modern authors, and with the fine and
ous remarks which have been made even on these passages. When
ns his eyes, therefore, on his own conceptions, they can scarcely fail
ear rude and contemptible. He is perpetually haunted and depressed
ideal presence of those great masters and their exacting critics. He
ıre to what comparisons his productions will be subjected among his
riends and associates; and recollects the derision with which so many
dventurers have been chased back to their obscurity. Thus the merit
great predecessors chills, instead of encouraging, his ardour; and the
ious names which have already reached to the summit of excellence,
ıe the tall and spreading trees of the forest, which overshadow and
le the saplings which have struck root in the soil below,—and afford
r to nothing but creepers and parasites.

ere is, no doubt, in some few individuals, "that strong divinity of
—that decided and irresistible vocation to glory, which, in spite of
se obstructions, calls out, perhaps, once or twice in a century, a bold
riginal poet from the herd of scholars and academical literati. But
ıtural tendency of their studies, and by far the most common opera-
is to repress originality, and discourage enterprise; and either to
e those whom nature meant for poets, into mere readers of poetry, or
ng them out in the form of witty parodists, or ingenious imitators.
endent of the reasons which have been already suggested, it will per-
ɔe found, too, that necessity is the mother of invention in this as well
the more vulgar arts; or, at least, that inventive genius will frequently
ɔer in inaction, where preceding ingenuity has in part supplied the
of the owner. A solitary and uninstructed man, with lively feelings
n inflammable imagination, will be easily led to exercise those gifts,
to occupy and relieve his mind in poetical composition; but if his
ıtion, his reading, and his society supply him with an abundant store

* Vol. viii. p. 329.

of images and emotions, he will probably think but little of these interna resources, and feed his mind contentedly with what has been provided b the industry of others.

To say nothing, therefore, of the distractions and the dissipation of min that belong to the commerce of the world, nor of the cares of minute ac curacy and high finishing which are imposed on the professed scholar there seem to be deeper reasons for the separation of originality and ac complishment; and for the partiality which has led poetry to choose almos all her favourites among the recluse and uninstructed. A youth of quic parts, in short, and creative fancy,—with just so much reading as to guid his ambition, and rough hew his notions of excellence,—if his lot b thrown in humble retirement, where he has no reputation to lose, and wher he can easily hope to excel all that he sees around him, is much more likely we think, to give himself up to poetry, and to train himself to habits c invention, than if he had been encumbered by the pretended helps of ex tended study and literary society.

If these observations should fail to strike of themselves, they may perhap derive additional weight from considering the very remarkable fact, tha almost all the great poets of every country have appeared in an early stag of their history, and in a period comparatively rude and unlettered. Ho mer went forth like the morning star before the dawn of literature in Greece and almost all the great and sublime poets of modern Europe are alread between two and three hundred years old. Since that time, althoug books and readers, and opportunities of reading, are multiplied a thousan fold, we have improved chiefly in point and terseness of expression, in th art of raillery, and in clearness and simplicity of thought. Force, richness and variety of invention, are now at least as rare as ever. But the literatur and refinement of the age does not exist at all for a rustic and illiterate in dividual; and, consequently, the present time is to him what the rude time of old were to the vigorous writers which adorned them.

But though, for these and for other reasons, we can see no propriety i regarding the poetry of Burns chiefly as the wonderful work of a peasant and thus admiring it much in the same way as if it had been written wit his toes; yet there are peculiarities in his works which remind us of the low ness of his origin, and faults for which the defects of his education affor an obvious cause, if not a legitimate apology. In forming a correct esti mate of these works, it is necessary to take into account those peculiarities

The first is, the undisciplined harshness and acrimony of his invective The great boast of polished life is the delicacy, and even the generosity, c its hostility,—that quality, which is still the characteristic, as it is the de nomination, of a gentleman,—that principle which forbids us to attack th defenceless, to strike the fallen, or to mangle the slain,—and enjoins us, i forging the shafts of satire, to increase the polish exactly as we add to thei keenness or their weight. For this, as well as for other things, we are in debted to chivalry; and of this Burns had none. His ingenious and amiabl biographer has spoken repeatedly in praise of his talents for satire,—w think, with a most unhappy partiality. His epigrams and lampoons ap pear to us, one and all, unworthy of him;—offensive from their extrem coarseness and violence,—and contemptible from their want of wit or bril liancy. They seem to have been written, not out of playful malice or vir tuous indignation, but out of fierce and ungovernable anger. His whol raillery consists in railing; and his satirical vein displays itself chiefly i

calling names and in swearing. We say this mainly with a reference to his personalities. In many of his more general representations of life and manners, there is, no doubt, much that may be called satirical, mixed up with admirable humour, and description of inimitable vivacity.

There is a similar want of polish, or at least of respectfulness, in the general tone of his gallantry. He has written with more passion, perhaps, and more variety of natural feeling, on the subject of love, than any other poet whatsoever,—but with a fervour that is sometimes indelicate, and seldom accommodated to the timidity and "sweet austere composure" of women of refinement. He has expressed admirably the feelings of an enamoured peasant, who, however refined or eloquent he may be, always approaches his mistress on a footing of equality; but has never caught that tone of chivalrous gallantry which uniformly abases itself in the presence of the object of its devotion. Accordingly, instead of suing for a smile, or melting in a tear, his muse deals in nothing but locked embraces and midnight rencontres; and, even in his complimentary effusions to ladies of the highest rank, is for straining them to the bosom of her impetuous votary. It is easy, accordingly, to see from his correspondence, that many of his female patronesses shrunk from the vehement familiarity of his admiration; and there are even some traits in the volumes before us, from which we can gather that he resented the shyness and estrangement to which these feelings gave rise, with at least as little chivalry as he had shown in producing them.

But the leading vice in Burns's character, and the cardinal deformity indeed of all his productions, was his contempt, or affectation of contempt, for prudence, decency, and regularity; and his admiration of thoughtlessness, oddity, and vehement sensibility;—his belief, in short, in *the dispensing power* of genius and social feeling, in all matters of morality and common sense. This is the very slang of the worst German plays, and the lowest of our town-made novels; nor can any thing be more lamentable, than that it should have found a patron in such a man as Burns, and communicated to a great part of his productions a character of immorality, at once contemptible and hateful. It is but too true, that men of the highest genius have frequently been hurried by their passions into a violation of prudence and duty; and there is something generous, at least, in the apology which their admirers may make for them, on the score of their keener feelings and habitual want of reflection. But this apology, which is quite unsatisfactory in the mouth of another, becomes an insult and an absurdity whenever it proceeds from their own. A man may say of his friend, that he is a noble-hearted fellow,—too generous to be just, and with too much spirit to be always prudent and regular. But he cannot be allowed to say even this of himself; and still less to represent himself as a hairbrained sentimental soul constantly carried away by fine fancies and visions of love and philanthropy, and born to confound and despise the cold-blooded sons of prudence and sobriety. This apology evidently destroys itself; for it shows that conduct to be the result of deliberate system, which it affects at the same time to justify as the fruit of mere thoughtlessness and casual impulse. Such protestations, therefore, will always be treated, as they deserve, not only with contempt, but with incredulity; and their magnanimous authors set down as determined profligates, who seek to disguise their selfishness under a name somewhat less revolting. That profligacy is almost always selfishness, and that the excuse of impetuous feeling can hardly ever be justly pleaded for those who neglect the ordinary duties of life, must be

apparent, we think, even to the least reflecting of those sons of fancy and song. It requires no habit of deep thinking, nor any thing more, indeed, than the information of an honest heart, to perceive that it is cruel and base to spend, in vain superfluities, that money which belongs of right to the pale industrious tradesman and his famishing infants; or that it is a vile prostitution of language, to talk of that man's generosity or goodness of heart, who sits raving about friendship and philanthropy in a tavern, while his wife's heart is breaking at her cheerless fireside, and his children pining in solitary poverty.

This pitiful cant of careless feeling and eccentric genius, accordingly, has never found much favour in the eyes of English sense and morality. The most signal effect which it ever produced, was on the muddy brains of some German youth, who left college in a body to rob on the highway, because Schiller had represented the captain of a gang as so very noble a creature. But in this country, we believe, a predilection for that honourable profession must have preceded this admiration of the character. The style we have been speaking of, accordingly, is now the heroics only of the hulks and the house of correction; and has no chance, we suppose, of being greatly admired, except in the farewell speech of a young gentleman preparing for Botany Bay.

It is humiliating to think how deeply Burns has fallen into this debasing error. He is perpetually making a parade of his thoughtlessness, inflammability, and imprudence, and talking with much complacency and exultation of the offence he has occasioned to the sober and correct part of mankind. This odious slang infects almost all his prose, and a very great proportion of his poetry; and is, we are persuaded, the chief, if not the only source of the disgust with which, in spite of his genius, we know that he is regarded by many very competent and liberal judges. His apology, too, we are willing to believe, is to be found in the original lowness of his situation, and the slightness of his acquaintance with the world. With his talents and powers of observation, he could not have seen *much* of the beings who echoed this raving, without feeling for them that distrust and contempt which would have made him blush to think he had ever stretched over them the protecting shield of his genius.

Akin to this most lamentable trait of vulgarity, and indeed in some measure arising out of it, is that perpetual boast of his own independence, which is obtruded upon the readers of Burns in almost every page of his writings. The sentiment itself is noble, and it is often finely expressed;—but a gentleman would only have expressed it when he was insulted or provoked: and would never have made it a spontaneous theme to those friends in whose estimation he felt that his honour stood clear. It is mixed up too in Burns with too fierce a tone of defiance; and indicates rather the pride of a sturdy peasant than the colour and natural elevation of a generous mind.

The last of the symptoms of rusticity which we think it necessary to notice in the works of this extraordinary man, is that frequent mistake of mere exaggeration and violence, for force and sublimity, which has defaced so much of his prose composition, and given an air of heaviness and labour to a good deal of his serious poetry. The truth is, that his *forte* was in humour and in pathos—or rather in tenderness of feeling; and that he has very seldom succeeded, either where mere wit and sprightliness, or *where* great energy and weight of sentiment were requisite. He had evi-

lently a very false and crude notion of what constituted *strength* of writing; and instead of that simple and brief directness which stamps the character of vigour upon every syllable, has generally had recourse to a mere accumulation of hyperbolical expressions, which encumber the diction instead of exalting it, and show the determination to be impressive, without the power of executing it. This error also we are inclined to ascribe entirely to the defects of his education. The value of simplicity in the expression of passion, is a lesson, we believe, of nature and of genius;—but its importance in mere grave and impressive writing, is one of the latest discoveries of rhetorical experience.

With the allowances and exceptions we have now stated, we think Burns entitled to the rank of a great and original genius. He has in all his compositions great force of conception, and great spirit and animation in its expression. He has taken a large range through the region of Fancy, and naturalised himself in almost all her climates. He has great humour,—great powers of description,—great pathos,—and great discrimination of character. Almost every thing that he says has spirit and originality; and every thing that he says well, is characterised by a charming facility, which gives a grace even to occasional rudeness, and communicates to the reader a delightful sympathy with the spontaneous soaring and conscious inspiration of the poet.

Considering the reception which these works have met with from the public, and the long period during which the greater part of them have been in their possession, it may appear superfluous to say any thing as to their characteristic or peculiar merit. Though the ultimate judgment of the public, however, be always sound, or at least decisive, as to its general result, it is not always very apparent upon what grounds it has proceeded; nor in consequence of what, or in spite of what, it has been obtained. In Burns's works there is much to censure, as well as much to praise; and as time has not yet separated his ore from its dross, it may be worth while to state, in a very general way, what we presume to anticipate as the result of this separation. Without pretending to enter at all into the comparative merit of particular passages, we may venture to lay it down as our opinion, —that his poetry is far superior to his prose; that his Scottish compositions are greatly to be preferred to his English ones; and that his Songs will probably outlive all his other productions.

The prose works of Burns consist almost entirely of his letters. They bear, as well as his poetry, the seal and the impress of his genius; but they contain much more bad taste, and are written with far more apparent labour. His poetry was almost all written primarily from feeling, and only secondarily from ambition. His letters seem to have been nearly all composed as exercises, and for display. There are few of them written with simplicity or plainness; and though natural enough as to the sentiment, they are generally very strained and elaborate in the expression. A very great proportion of them, too, relate neither to facts nor feelings peculiarly connected with the author or his correspondent; but are made up of general declamation, moral reflections, and vague discussions,—all evidently composed for the sake of effect, and frequently introduced with long complaints of having nothing to say, and of the necessity and difficulty of letter-writing.

By far the best of these compositions are such as we should consider as exceptions from this general character,—such as contain some specific in-

formation as to himself, or are suggested by events or observations directly applicable to his correspondent. One of the best, perhaps, is that addressed to Dr. Moore, containing an account of his early life, of which Dr. Currie has made such a judicious use in his Biography. It is written with great clearness and characteristic effect, and contains many touches of easy humour and natural eloquence. We are struck, as we open the book accidentally, with the following original application of a classical image by this unlettered rustic. Talking of the first vague aspirations of his own gigantic mind, he says,—we think very finely—"I had felt some early stirrings of ambition; but they were the blind gropings of Homer's Cyclop round the walls of his cave." Of his other letters, those addressed to Mrs. Dunlop are, in our opinion, by far the best. He appears, from first to last, to have stood somewhat in awe of this excellent lady, and to have been no less sensible of her sound judgment and strict sense of propriety, than of her steady and generous partiality.

We must apprise our southern readers, that all his best pieces are written in Scotch; and that it is impossible for them to form any adequate judgment of their merits, without a pretty long residence among those who still use that language. To be able to translate the words, is but a small part of the knowledge that is necessary. The whole genius and idiom of the language must be familiar; and the characters, and habits, and associations of those who speak it. We beg leave, too, in passing, to observe, that this Scotch is not to be considered as a provincial dialect,—the vehicle only of rustic vulgarity and rude local humour. It is the language of a whole country,—long an independent kingdom, and still separate in laws, character, and manners. It is by no means peculiar to the vulgar; but is the common speech of the whole nation in early life,—and with many of its most exalted and accomplished individuals throughout their whole existence: and if it be true that in later times it has been, in some measure, laid aside by the more ambitious and aspiring of the present generation, it is still recollected, even by them, as the familiar language of their childhood, and of those who were the earliest objects of their love and veneration. It is connected, in their imagination, not only with that olden time which is uniformly conceived as more pure, lofty, and simple than the present, but also with all the soft and bright colours of remembered childhood and domestic affection. All its phrases conjure up images of school-day innocence, and sports, and friendships, which have no pattern in succeeding years. Add to all this, that it is the language of a great body of poetry, with which almost all Scotchmen are familiar; and, in particular, of a great multitude of songs, written with more tenderness, nature, and feeling, than any other lyric compositions that are extant; and we may perhaps be allowed to say that the Scotch is, in reality, a highly poetical language, and that it is an ignorant, as well as an illiberal prejudice, which would seek to confound it with the barbarous dialects of Yorkshire or Devon. In composing his Scottish poems, therefore, Burns did not make an instinctive and necessary use of the only dialect he could employ. The last letter which we have quoted, proves, that before he had penned a singe couplet, he could write in the dialect of England with far greater purity and propriety than nine-tenths of those who are called well educated in that country. He wrote in Scotch, because the writings which he most aspired to imitate were composed in that language; and it is evident, from the variations preserved by Dr. Currie, that *he took much* greater pains with the beauty and purity of his expres-

sions in Scotch than in English, and, every one who understands both must admit, with infinitely better success.

We have said that Burns is almost equally distinguished for his tenderness and his humour:—we might have added, for a faculty of combining them both in the same subject, not altogether without parallel in the older poets and ballad-makers, but altogether singular, we think, among modern critics. The passages of pure humour are entirely Scottish,—and untranslatable. They consist in the most picturesque representations of life and manners, enlivened, and even exalted, by traits of exquisite sagacity and unexpected reflection. His tenderness is of two sorts; that which is combined with circumstances and characters of humble and sometimes ludicrous simplicity; and that which is produced by gloomy and distressful impressions acting on a mind of keen sensibility. The passages which belong to the former description are, we think, the most exquisite and original, and, in our estimation, indicate the greatest and most amiable turn of genius; both as being accompanied by fine and feeling pictures of humble life, and as requiring that delicacy as well as justness of conception, by which alone the fastidiousness of an ordinary reader can be reconciled to such representations. The exquisite description of "The Cotter's Saturday Night" affords, perhaps, the finest example of this sort of pathetic. Its whole beauty cannot, indeed, be discerned but by those whom experience has enabled to judge of the admirable fidelity and completeness of the picture.

The charm of the lines written on turning up a mouse's nest with the plough, will also be found to consist in the simple tenderness of the delineation.

The verses to a Mountain Daisy, though more elegant and picturesque, seem to derive their chief beauty from the same sentiment.

There are many touches of the same kind in most of the popular and beautiful poems in this collection, especially in the Winter Night—the address to his old Mare—the address to the Devil, etc;—in all which, though the greater part of the piece be merely ludicrous and picturesque, there are traits of a delicate and tender feeling, indicating that unaffected softness of heart which is always so enchanting.

The finest examples, however, of this simple and unpretending tenderness, is to be found in those songs which are likely to transmit the name of Burns to all future generations. He found this delightful trait in the old Scottish ballads, which he took for his model, and upon which he has improved with a felicity and delicacy of imitation altogether unrivalled in the history of literature.

We shall conclude with two general remarks—the one national, the other critical. The first is, that it is impossible to read the productions of Burns, along with his history, without forming a higher idea of the intelligence, taste, and accomplishments of the peasantry than most of those in the higher ranks are disposed to entertain. Without meaning to deny that he himself was endowed with rare and extraordinary gifts of genius and fancy, it is evident, from the whole details of his history, as well as from the letters of his brother, and the testimony of Mr. Murdoch and others to the character of his father, that the whole family, and many of their associates, who have never emerged from the native obscurity of their condition, possessed talents, and taste, and intelligence, which are little suspected to lurk in those humble retreats. His epistles to brother poets, in the rank of farmers and shopkeepers in the adjoining villages,—the existence of a book-society, and

debating-club among persons of that description, and many other incidental traits in his sketches of his youthful companions,—all contribute to show, that not only good sense, and enlightened morality, but literature, and talents for speculation, are far more generally diffused in society than is generally imagined; and that the delights and the benefits of these generous and humanising pursuits are by no means confined to those whom leisure and affluence have courted to their enjoyment. That much of this is peculiar to Scotland, and may be properly referred to our excellent institutions for parochial education, and to the natural sobriety and prudence of our nation, may certainly be allowed: but we have no doubt that there is a good deal of the same principle in England, and that the actual intelligence of the lower orders will be found, there also, very far to exceed the ordinary estimates of their superiors. It is pleasing to know that the sources of rational enjoyment are so widely disseminated; and, in a free country, it is comfortable to think that so great a proportion of the people is able to appreciate the advantages of its condition, and fit to be relied on in all emergencies where steadiness and intelligence may be required.

Our other remark is of a more limited application; and is addressed chiefly to the followers and patrons of that new school of poetry, against which we have thought it our duty to neglect no opportunity of testifying. Those gentlemen are outrageous for simplicity; and we beg leave to recommend to them the simplicity of Burns. He has copied the spoken language of passion and affection, with infinitely more fidelity than they have ever done, on all occasions which properly admitted of such adaptation: but he has not rejected the helps of elevated language and habitual associations; nor debased his composition by an affectation of babyish interjections, and all the puling expletives of an old nurserymaid's vocabulary. They may look long enough among his nervous and manly lines before they find any "Good lacks!"—"Dear hearts!"—or "As a body may say," in them; or any stuff about dancing daffodils and sister Emmelines. Let them think with what infinite contempt the powerful mind of Burns would have perused the story of Alice Fell and her duffle cloak,—of Andrew Jones and the half-crown,—or of little Dan without breeches, and his thievish grandfather. Let them contrast their own fantastical personages of hysterical schoolmasters and sententious leech-gatherers, with the authentic rustics of Burns's Cotter's Saturday Night, and his inimitable songs; and reflect on the different reception which these personifications have met with from the public. Though they will not be reclaimed from their puny affectation by the example of their learned predecessors, they may perhaps submit to be admonished by a self-taught and illiterate poet, who drew from Nature far more directly than they can do, and produced something so much liker the admired copies of the masters whom they have adjured.*

* That many of the observations contained in the above able criticism on the poetical merits of Burns are unmeritedly severe, is too manifest; and perhaps no article in the Edinburgh Review, with the exception of the caustic and scurrilous attack on the expanding genius of Byron, ever roused so strong and general a feeling of reprobation. It must be admitted that the writer, who is known to be Mr. Jeffrey, did not, in this instance, exhibit that lenity and tenderness to the errors of a great and original poet, which should characterise the mind of the true critic, peculiarly "formed to discern what is beautiful, and to seize eagerly on every touch of genius with the sympathy of kindred affection; and, in the secret consciousness of a congenial inspiration, to share, in some measure, the triumph of the artist." If, however, the reviewer was betrayed, in the haste *of composition,* into any expressions of reprehension which the faults of Burns did not merit, or *which his unrivalled talents* and the peculiarities of his situation in life should have softened, this

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Burns first came upon the world as a prodigy; and was, in that character, entertained by it, in the usual fashion, with loud, vague, tumultuous wonder, speedily subsiding into censure and neglect; till his early and most mournful death again awakened an enthusiasm for him, which, especially as there was now nothing to be done, and much to be spoken, has prolonged itself even to our own time. It is true, the "nine days" have long since elapsed; and the very continuance of this clamour proves that Burns was no vulgar wonder. Accordingly, even in sober judgments, where, as years passed by, he has come to rest more and more exclusively on his own intrinsic merits, and may now be wellnigh shorn of that casual radiance, he appears not only as a true British poet, but as one of the most considerable British men of the eighteenth century. Let it not be objected that he did little: he did much, if we consider where and how. If the work performed was small, we must remember that he had his very materials to discover; for the metal he worked in lay hid under the desert, where no eye but his had guessed its existence; and we may almost say that, with his own hand, he had to construct the tools for fashioning it. For he found himself in deepest obscurity, without instruction, without model; or with models only of the meanest sort. An educated man stands, as it were, in the midst of a boundless arsenal and magazine, filled with all the weapons and engines which man's skill has been able to devise from the earliest time; and he works, accordingly, with a strength borrowed from all past ages. How different is *his* state who stands on the outside of that storehouse, and feels that its gates must be stormed, or remain for ever shut against him! His means are the commonest and rudest: the mere work done is no measure of his strength. A dwarf behind his steam engine may remove mountains; but no dwarf will hew them down with the pickaxe; and he must be a Titan that hurls them abroad with his arms.

It is in this last shape that Burns presents himself. Born in an age the most prosaic Britain had yet seen, and in a condition the most disadvantageous, where his mind, if it accomplished aught, must accomplish it under the pressure of continual bodily toil, nay, of penury and desponding apprehension of the worst evils, and with no furtherance but such knowledge as dwells in a poor man's hut, and the rhymes of a Fergusson or Ramsay for his standard of beauty, he sinks not under all these impediments: through the fogs and darkness of that obscure region, his eagle eye discerns the true relations of the world and human life; he grows into intellectual strength, and trains himself to intellectual expertness. Impelled by the irrepressible movement of his inward spirit, he struggles forward into the general view, and with haughty modesty lays down before us, as the fruit of his labour, a gift, which Time has now pronounced im-

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harsh judgment on his character as a writer could not have arisen from a perverted taste, or from a malicious design to aggravate the defects of so highly gifted a being as the Ayrshire ploughman. Mr. Jeffrey has subsequently taken occasion to make a public acknowledgment of the severity of his infliction upon poor Burns: and, with a degree of magnanimity which reflects credit on his honourable mind, has adorned the pages of the Edinburgh Review with several beautiful and discriminating panegyrics on Scotland's poetical idol. (See further observations on this subject in the Preliminary Dissertation to this work.)

* Lockhart's *Life of Burns*.—Vol. xlviii. p. 270. December, 1828.

perishable. Add to all this, that his darksome drudging childhood and youth was by far the kindliest era of his whole life; and that he died in his thirty-seventh year: and then ask if it be strange that his poems are imperfect, and of small extent, or that his genius attained no mastery in its art. Alas, his sun shone as through a tropical tornado; and the pale Shadow of Death eclipsed it at noon! Shrouded in such baleful vapours, the genius of Burns was never seen in clear azure splendour, enlightening the world: but some beams from it did, by fits, pierce through; and it tinted those clouds with rainbow and orient colours into a glory and stern grandeur, which men silently gazed on, with wonder and tears!

We are anxious not to exaggerate; for it is exposition rather than admiration that our readers require of us here; and yet to avoid some tendency to that side is no easy matter. We love Burns, and we pity him; and love and pity are prone to magnify. Criticism, it is sometimes thought, should be a cold business; we are not so sure of this: but at all events, our concern with Burns is not exclusively that of critics. True and genial as his poetry must appear, it is not chiefly as a poet, but as a man, that he interests and affects us. He was often advised to write a tragedy: time and means were not lent him for this; but through life he enacted a tragedy, and one of the deepest. We question whether the world has since witnessed so utterly sad a scene; whether Napoleon himself, left to brawl with Sir Hudson Lowe, and perish on his rock "amid the melancholy main," presented to "the reflecting mind such a spectacle of pity and fear," as did this intrinsically nobler, gentler, and perhaps greater soul, wasting itself away in hopeless struggles with base entanglements, which coiled closer and closer round him, till only Death opened him an outlet. Conquerors are a race with whom the world could well dispense; nor can the hard intellect, the unsympathising loftiness, and high but selfish enthusiasm of such persons, inspire us in general with any affection; at best, it may excite amazement, and their fall, like that of a pyramid, will be beheld with a certain sadness and awe. But a true poet, a man in whose heart resides some effluence of Wisdom, some tone of the "Eternal Melodies," is the most precious gift that can be bestowed on a generation: we see in him a freer, purer developement of whatever is noblest in ourselves; his life is a rich lesson to us, and we mourn his death, as that of a benefactor who loved and taught us.

Such a gift had Nature in her bounty bestowed on us in Robert Burns, but with queenlike indifference she cast it from her hand, like a thing of no moment; and it was defaced and torn asunder, as an idle bauble, before we recognised it. To the ill-starred Burns was given the power of making man's life more venerable, but that of wisely guiding his own was not given. Destiny—for so in our ignorance we must speak—his faults, the faults of others, proved too hard for him; and that spirit, which might have soared, could it have but walked, soon sank to the dust, its glorious faculties trodden under foot in the blossom, and died, we may almost say without ever having lived. And so kind and warm a soul; so full of inborn riches, of love to all living and lifeless things! How his heart flows out in sympathy over universal Nature, and in her bleakest provinces discerns a beauty and meaning! The "Daisy" falls not unheeded under his ploughshare; nor the ruined nest of that "wee, cowering, timorous beastie," cast forth, after all its provident pains, to "thole the sleety dribble, and cranreuch *cauld.*" *The* "*hoar* visage" of Winter delights him: he dwells with a sad

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All that remains of Burns, the writings he has left, seem to us, as we hinted above, no more than a poor mutilated fraction of what was in him; brief, broken glimpses of a genius that could never show itself complete; that wanted all things for completeness: culture, leisure, true effort, nay, even length of life. His poems are, with scarcely any exception, mere occasional effusions, poured forth with little premeditation, expressing, by such means as offered, the passion, opinion, or humour of the hour. Never in one instance was it permitted him to grapple with any subject with the full collection of his strength, to fuse and mould it in the concentrated fire

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of his genius. To try by the strict rules of art such imperfect fragments would be at once unprofitable and unfair. Nevertheless, there is something in these poems, marred and defective as they are, which forbids the most fastidious student of poetry to pass them by. Some sort of enduring quality they must have: for, after fifty years of the wildest vicissitudes in poetic taste, they still continue to be read; nay, are read more and more eagerly, more and more extensively; and this not only by literary virtuosos, and that class upon whom transitory causes operate most strongly, but by all classes, down to the most hard, unlettered, and truly natural class, who read little, and especially no poetry, except because they find pleasure in it. The grounds of so singular and wide a popularity, which extends, in a literal sense, from the palace to the hut, and over all regions where the English tongue is spoken, are well worth enquiring into. After every just deduction, it seems to imply some rare excellence in these works. What is that excellence?

To answer this question will not lead us far. The excellence of Burns is, indeed, among the rarest, whether in poetry or prose; but, at the same time, it is plain and easily recognised: his *sincerity*, his indisputable air of truth. Here are no fabulous woes or joys; no hollow fantastic sentimentalities; no wiredrawn refinings, either in thought or feeling: the passion that is traced before us has glowed in a living heart; the opinion he utters has risen in his own understanding, and been a light to his own steps. He does not write from hearsay, but from sight and experience; it is the scenes he has lived and laboured amidst, that he describes; those scenes, rude and humble as they are, have kindled beautiful emotions in his soul, noble thoughts, and definite resolves; and he speaks forth what is in him, not from any outward call of vanity or interest, but because his heart is too full to be silent. He speaks it, too, with such melody and modulation as he can; "in homely rustic jingle;" but it is his own, and genuine. This is the grand secret for finding readers and retaining them; let him who would move and convince others, be first moved and convinced himself. Horace's rule, *Si vis me flere*, is applicable in a wider sense than the literal one. To every poet, to every writer, we might say: Be true, if you would be believed. Let a man but speak forth with genuine earnestness the thought, the emotion, the actual condition, of his own heart, and other men, so strangely are we all knit together by the tie of sympathy, must and will give heed to him. In culture, in extent of view, we may stand above the speaker, or below him; but in either case, his words, if they are honest and sincere, will find some response within us; for, in spite of all casual varieties in outward rank, or inward, as face answers to face, so does the heart of man to man.

This may appear a very simple principle, and one which Burns had little merit in discovering. True, the discovery is easy enough: but the practical appliance is not easy; is indeed the fundamental difficulty which all poets have to strive with, and which scarcely one in the hundred ever fairly surmounts. A head too dull to discriminate the true from the false; a heart too dull to love the one at all risks, and to hate the other in spite of all temptations, are alike fatal to a writer. With either, or, as more commonly happens, with both, of these deficiencies, combine a love of distinction, a wish to be original, which is seldom wanting, and we have Affectation, the bane of literature, as Cant, its elder brother, is of morals. How often does the one and the other front us, in poetry, as in life! Great poets themselves

not always free of this vice; nay, it is precisely on a certain sort and ee of greatness that it is most commonly ingrafted. A strong effort excellence will sometimes solace itself with a mere shadow of success, he who has much to unfold, will sometimes unfold it imperfectly. on, for instance, was no common man: yet if we examine his poetry this view, we shall find it far enough from faultless. Generally king, we should say that it is not true. He refreshes us, not with the e fountain, but too often with vulgar strong waters, stimulating indeed e taste, but soon ending in dislike, or even nausea. Are his Harolds Giaours, we would ask, real men, we mean, poetically consistent and eivable men? Do not these characters, does not the character of their or, which more or less shines through them all, rather appear a thing n for the occasion; no natural or possible mode of being, but something ded to look much grander than nature? Surely, all these stormful ies, this volcanic heroism, superhuman contempt, and moody despera- with so much scowling, and teeth-gnashing, and other sulphurous ours, is more like the brawling of a player in some paltry tragedy, which last three hours, than the bearing of a man in the business of life, h is to last threescore and ten years. To our minds, there is a taint of ort, something which we should call theatrical, false, and affected, in one of these otherwise powerful pieces. Perhaps *Don Juan*, espe- the latter parts of it, is the only thing approaching to a *sincere* work er wrote; the only work where he showed himself, in any measure, was; and seemed so intent on his subject as, for moments, to forget elf. Yet Byron hated this vice; we believe, heartily detested it: nay, d declared formal war against it in words. So difficult is it even for rongest to make this primary attainment, which might seem the sim- of all: to *read its own consciousness without mistakes*, without s involuntary or wilful! We recollect no poet of Burns's susceptibility comes before us from the first, and abides with us to the last, with such l want of affectation. He is an honest man, and an honest writer. In ccesses and his failures, in his greatness and his littleness, he is ever , simple, true, and glitters with no lustre but his own. We reckon this a great virtue; to be, in fact, the root of most other virtues, literary ll as moral.

is necessary, however, to mention, that it is to the poetry of Burns that ow allude; to those writings which he had time to meditate, and where pecial reason existed to warp his critical feeling, or obstruct his en- our to fulfil it. Certain of his Letters and other fractions of prose com- ion by no means deserve this praise. Here, doubtless, there is not the natural truth of style; but, on the contrary, something not only stiff, strained and twisted; a certain highflown inflated tone; the stilting basis of which contrasts ill with the firmness and rugged simplicity of his poorest verses. Thus no man, it would appear, is altogether un- ted. Does not Shakspeare himself sometimes premeditate the sheerest bast? But even with regard to these Letters of Burns, it is but fair to that he had two excuses. The first was, his comparative deficiency in uage. Burns, though for most part he writes with singular force, and gracefulness, is not master of English prose, as he is of Scottish verse; master of it, we mean, in proportion to the depth and vehemence of his ter. These Letters strike us as the effort of a man to express something ch he has no organ fit for expressing. But a second and weightier ex-

cuse is to be found in the peculiarity of Burns's social rank. His corre dents are often men whose relation to him he has never accurately a tained; whom therefore he is either forearming himself against, o unconsciously flattering, by adopting the style he thinks will please At all events, we should remember that these faults, even in his Letter not the rule, but the exception. Whenever he writes, as one woul wish to do, to trusted friends and on real interests, his style becomes si vigorous, expressive, sometimes even beautiful. His Letters to Mrs. D are uniformly excellent.

But we return to his poetry. In addition to its sincerity, it has a peculiar merit, which indeed is but a mode, or perhaps a means, foregoing. It displays itself in his choice of subjects, or rather in h difference as to subjects, and the power he has of making all subjec teresting. The ordinary poet, like the ordinary man, is for ever se in external circumstances the help which can be found only in hi In what is familiar and near at hand, he discerns no form or comeli home is not poetical, but prosaic. It is in some past, distant, conven world, that poetry resides for him; were he there and not here, we thus and not so, it would be well with him. Hence our innumerabl of rose-coloured novels and iron-mailed epics, with their locality n the Earth, but somewhere nearer to the Moon. Hence our Virgi the Sun, and our Knights of the Cross, malicious Saracens in tur and copper-coloured chiefs in wampum, and so many other truc figures from the heroic times or the heroic climates, who on all swarm in our poetry. Peace be with them! But yet, as a great mo proposed preaching to the men of this century, so would we fain pres the poets "a sermon on the duty of staying at home." Let them be that heroic ages and heroic climates can do little for them. That of life has attraction for us, less because it is better or nobler than our than simply because it is different; and even this attraction must the most transient sort. For will not our own age, one day, be an an one; and have as quaint a costume as the rest, not contrasted wit rest, therefore, but ranked along with them in respect of quaintn Does Homer interest us now, because he wrote of what passed o his native Greece, and two centuries before he was born; or be he wrote of what passed in God's world, and in the heart of man, w is the same after thirty centuries? Let our poets look to this: is feeling really finer, truer, and their vision deeper than that of other they have nothing to fear, even from the humblest subject; is it n —they have nothing to hope, but an ephemeral favour, even from highest.

The poet, we cannot but think, can never have far to seek for a sub the elements of his art are in him, and around him, on every hand; him the ideal world is not remote from the actual, but under it and w it; nay, he is a poet, precisely because he can discern it there. Wher there is a sky above him, and a world around him, the poet is in his pl for here too is man's existence, with its infinite longings and s acquirings; its ever-thwarted, ever-renewed endeavours; its unspeak aspirations; its fears and hopes that wander through eternity; and all mystery of brightness and of gloom that it was ever made of in any or climate, since man first began to live. Is there not the fifth *of a tragedy* in every death-bed, though it were a peasant's, and a

ath? and are wooings and weddings obsolete, that there can be dy no longer? are men suddenly grown wise, that Laughter must nger shake his sides, but be cheated of his Farce? Man's life nature is, as it was, and as it will ever be. But the poet must have e to read these things, and a heart to understand them; or they come ass away before him in vain. He is a *vates*, a seer; a gift of vision een given him. Has life no meanings for him, which another t equally decipher? then he is no poet, and Delphi itself will not him one.

this respect, Burns, though not perhaps absolutely a great poet, manifests his capability, better proves the truth of his genius, than ad, by his own strength, kept the whole Minerva Press going, to nd of his literary course. He shows himself at least a poet of 's own making; and Nature, after all, is still the grand agent in g poets. We often hear of this and the other external condition requisite for the existence of a poet. Sometimes it is a certain sort ning; he must have studied certain things, studied for instance lder dramatists," and so learned a poetic language; as if poetry the tongue, not in the heart. At other times we are told, he must d in a certain rank, and must be on a confidential footing with the classes; because, above all other things, he must see the world. seeing the world, we apprehend this will cause him little difficulty, have but an eye to see it with. Without eyes, indeed, the task be hard. But happily every poet is born *in* the world; and sees h or against his will, every day and every hour he lives. The ious workmanship of man's heart, the true light and the inscrutable ss of man's destiny, reveal themselves not only in capital cities, and ed saloons, but in every hut and hamlet where men have their abode. lo not the elements of all human virtues, and all human vices; the ns at once of a Borgia and of a Luther, lie written, in stronger or lines, in the consciousness of every individual bosom, that has ed honest self-examination? Truly, this same world may be seen ssgiel and Tarbolton, if we look well, as clearly as it ever came to n Crockford's, or the Tuileries itself.

sometimes still harder requisitions are laid on the poor aspirant to ; for it is hinted that he should have *been born* two centuries ago; ich as poetry, soon after that date, vanished from the earth, and e no longer attainable by men! Such cobweb speculations have, nd then, overhung the field of literature; but they obstruct not the h of any plant there: the Shakspeare, or the Burns, unconsciously, erely as he walks onward, silently brushes them away. Is not every an impossibility till he appear? Why do we call him new and al, if *we* saw where his marble was lying, and what fabric he could om it? It is not the material but the workman that is wanting. It the dark *place* that hinders, but the dim *eye*. A Scottish peasant's as the meanest and rudest of all lives, till Burns became a poet in it, poet of it; found it a *man*'s life, and therefore significant to men. A nd battle-fields remain unsung; but the *Wounded Hare* has not ed without its memorial; a balm of mercy yet breathes on us from mb agonies, because a poet was there. Our *Halloween* had passed passed, in rude awe and laughter, since the era of the Druids; but no ritus, till Burns, discerned in it the materials of a Scottish Idyl:

neither was the *Holy Fair* any *Council of Trent* or Roman *Jubilee*; but nevertheless, *Superstition*, and *Hypocrisy*, and *Fun* having been propitious to him, in this man's hand it became a poem, instinct with satire, and genuine comic life. Let but the true poet be given us, we repeat it, place him where and how you will, and true poetry will not be wanting.

Independently of the essential gift of poetic feeling, as we have now attempted to describe it, a certain rugged sterling worth pervades whatever Burns has written: a virtue as of green fields and mountain breezes, dwells in his poetry; it is redolent of natural life, and hardy natural men. There is a decisive strength in him, and yet a sweet native gracefulness: he is tender, and he is vehement, yet without constraint or too visible effort; he melts the heart, or inflames it, with a power which seems habitual and familiar to him. We see in him the gentleness, the trembling pity, of a woman, with the deep earnestness, the force and passionate ardour, of a hero. Tears lie in him, and consuming fire; as lightning lurks in the drops of the summer cloud. He has a resonance in his bosom for every note of human feeling; the high and the low, the sad, the ludicrous, the joyful, are welcome in their turns to his "lightly-moved and all-conceiving spirit." And observe with what a prompt and eager force he grasps his subject, be it what it may! How he fixes, as it were, the full image of the matter in his eye; full and clear in every lineament; and catches the real type and essence of it, amid a thousand accidents and superficial circumstances, no one of which misleads him! Is it of reason; some truth to be discovered? No sophistry, no vain surface-logic detains him; quick, resolute, unerring, he pierces through into the marrow of the question; and speaks his verdict with an emphasis that cannot be forgotten. Is it of description; some visual object to be represented? No poet of any age or nation is more graphic than Burns: the characteristic features disclose themselves to him at a glance; three lines from his hand, and we have a likeness. And, in that rough dialect, in that rude, often awkward, metre, so clear and definite a likeness! It seems a draughtsman working with a burned stick; and yet the burin of a Retsch is not more expressive or exact.

This clearness of sight we may call the foundation of all talent; for in fact, unless we *see* our object, how shall we know how to place or prize it, in our understanding, our imagination, our affections? Yet it is not in itself perhaps a very high excellence; but capable of being united indifferently with the strongest, or with ordinary, powers. Homer surpasses all men in this quality; but, strangely enough, at no great distance below him are Richardson and Defoe. It belongs, in truth, to what is called a lively mind; and gives no sure indication of the higher endowments that may exist along with it. In all the three cases we have mentioned, it is combined with great garrulity; their descriptions are detailed, ample, and lovingly exact: Homer's fire bursts through from time to time, as if by accident; but Defoe and Richardson have no fire. Burns, again, is not more distinguished by the clearness than by the impetuous force of his conceptions. Of the strength, the piercing emphasis, with which he thought, his emphasis of expression may give a humble but the readiest proof. Who ever uttered sharper sayings than his; words more memorable, now by their burning vehemence, now by their cool vigour and laconic pith? A single phrase depicts a whole subject, a whole scene. Our Scottish forefathers in the battle-field struggled forward, he says, "*red-wat-shod;*" giving in this one word a full vision of *horror and carnage*, perhaps too frightfully accurate for art!

act, one of the leading features in the mind of Burns is this vigour strictly intellectual perceptions. A resolute force is ever visible in his ents, as in his feelings and volitions. Professor Stewart says of him ome surprise—"All the faculties of Burns's mind were, as far as I judge, equally vigorous; and his predilection for poetry was rather ult of his own enthusiastic and impassioned temper, than of a genius ively adapted to that species of composition. From this conversation ld have pronounced him to be fitted to excel in whatever walk of on he had chosen to exert his abilities." But this, if we mistake not, l times the very essence of a truly poetical endowment. Poetry, ex- sensibility, and a certain vague pervading tunefulness of nature, is no e faculty, no organ which can be superadded to the rest, or disjoined nem; but rather the result of their general harmony and completion. lings, the gifts, that exist in the poet, are those that exist, with more developement, in every human soul: the imagination, which rs at the hell of Dante, is the same faculty, weaker in degree, which hat picture into being. How does the poet speak to all men, with but by being still more a man than they? Shakspeare, it has been served, in the planning and completing of his tragedies, has shown rstanding, were it nothing more, which might have governed states, ed a *Novum Organum*. What Burns's force of understanding may en, we have less means of judging; for it dwelt among the humblest never saw philosophy, and never rose, except for short intervals, region of great ideas. Nevertheless, sufficient indication remains his works; we discern the brawny movements of a gigantic though ed strength, and can understand how, in conversation, his quick ight into men and things may, as much as aught else about him, nazed the best thinkers of his time and country.

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r the most finished, complete, and truly inspired pieces of Burns hout dispute, to be found among his *Songs*. It is here that, although a small aperture, his light shines with the least obstruction; in est beauty, and pure sunny clearness. The reason may be, that a brief and simple species of composition; and requires nothing so or its perfection, as genuine poetic feeling, genuine music of heart. g has its rules equally with the Tragedy; rules which in most cases ly fulfilled, in many cases are not so much as felt. We might write a ay on the Songs of Burns; which we reckon by far the best that has yet produced: for indeed since the era of Queen Elizabeth, w not that, by any other hand, aught truly worth attention has been lished in this department. True, we have songs enough "by persons ty;" we have tawdry, hollow, wine-bred madrigals; many a "speech" in the flowing and watery vein of Ossorius the Portugal rich in sonorous words, and, for moral, dashed perhaps with some sentimental sensuality; all which many persons cease not from uring to sing; though for the most part, we fear, the music is but from at outwards, or at best from some region far enough short of the ot in which, but in a certain inane Limbo of the fancy, or even in porous debatable land on the outside of the nervous system, most madrigals and rhymed speeches seem to have originated. With gs of Burns we must not name these things. Independently of the nanly, heartfelt sentiment that ever pervades *his* poetry, his songs

are honest in another point of view; in form, as well as in spirit. The not *affect* to be set to music, but they actually and in themselves are mu they have received their life, and fashioned themselves together, in the dium of harmony, as Venus rose from the bosom of the sea. The st the feeling, is not detailed, but suggested; not *said*, or sponted in rh rical completeness and coherence; but *sung*, in fitful gushes, in glo hints, in fantastic breaks, in *warblings* not of the voice only, but of whole mind. We consider this to be the essence of a song; and th songs since the little careless catches, and, as it were, drops of song, w Shakspeare has here and there sprinkled over his plays, fulfil this cond in nearly the same degree as most of Burnes's do. Such grace and tru external movement, too, presupposes in general a corresponding and truth of sentiment, and inward meaning. The songs of Burns ar more perfect in the former quality, than in the latter. With what tende he sings, yet with what vehemence and entireness! There is a pie wail in his sorrow, the purest rapture in his joy; he burns with the s est ire, or laughs with the loudest or slyest mirth; and yet he is swee soft, "sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet, and soft as their pa tear!" If we farther take into account the immense variety of his sub how, from the loud flowing revel in *Willie brew'd a peck o' Maut*, t still, rapt enthusiasm of sadness for *Mary in Heaven;* from the glad greeting of *Auld Langsyne*, or the comic archness of *Duncan Gray*, fire-eyed fury of *Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled*, he has found a ton words for every mood of man's heart,—it will seem a small praise rank him as the first of all our song writers; for we know not where one worthy of being second to him.

It is on his songs, as we believe, that Burns's chief influence as an a will ultimately be found to depend; nor, if our Fletcher's aphorism is shall we account this a small influence. "Let me make the song people," said he, "and you shall make its laws." Surely, if eve poet might have equalled himself with legislators, on this ground, Burns. His songs are already part of the mother-tongue not of Sc only but of Britain, and of the millions that in all the ends of the speak a British language. In hut and hall, as the heart unfolds its the joy and woe of existence, the name, the voice, of that joy and tha is the name and voice which Burns has given them. Strictly spe perhaps, no British man has so deeply affected the thoughts and feeli so many men, as this solitary and altogether private individual, with apparently the humblest.

In another point of view, moreover, we incline to think that Burn fluence may have been considerable: we mean, as exerted specia the literature of his country, at least on the literature of Scotland. A the great changes which British, particularly Scottish, literature h dergone since that period, one of the greatest will be found to consis remarkable increase of nationality. Even the English writers most p in Burns's time, were little distinguished for their literary patrioti this its best sense. A certain attenuated cosmopolitanism had, in measure, taken place of the old insular home-feeling; literature was were, without any local environment, was not nourished by the aff which spring from a native soil. Our Grays and Glovers seemed to almost as if *in vacuo*; the thing written bears no mark of place; it written so much for Englishmen, as for men; or rather, which is t

ble result of this, for certain generalisations which philosophy termed
Goldsmith is an exception: not so Johnson; the scene of his *Rambler*
le more English than that of his *Rasselas*. But if such was, in some
e, the case with England, it was, in the highest degree, the case with
and. In fact, our Scottish literature had, at that period, a very sin-
aspect; unexampled, so far as we know, except perhaps at Geneva,
e the same state of matters appears still to continue. For a long period
Scotland became British, we had no literature: at the date when
on and Steele were writing their *Spectators*, our good John Boston
writing, with the noblest intent, but alike in defiance of grammar and
sophy, his *Fourfold State of Man*. Then came the schisms in our
al church, and the fiercer schisms in our body politic: theologic ink,
acobite blood, with gall enough in both cases, seemed to have blotted out
tellect of the country; however, it was only obscured, not obliterated.
Kames made nearly the first attempt, and a tolerably clumsy one, at
g English; and ere long Hume, Robertson, Smith, and a whole host of
ers, attracted hither the eyes of all Europe. And yet in this brilliant
itation of our "fervid genius," there was nothing truly Scottish, nothing
nous; except, perhaps, the natural impetuosity of intellect, which we
mes claim, and are sometimes upbraided with, as a characteristic of
tion. It is curious to remark that Scotland, so full of writers, had
ttish culture, nor indeed any English; our culture was almost exclu-
French. It was by studying Racine and Voltaire, Batteux and Boileau,
ames had trained himself to be a critic and philosopher; it was the
f Montesquieu and Mably that guided Robertson in his political spe-
ns; Quesnay's lamp that kindled the lamp of Adam Smith. Hume
o rich a man to borrow; and perhaps he reacted on the French more
e was acted on by them; but neither had he aught to do with Scotland;
rgh, equally with La Flèche, was but the lodging and laboratory, in
he not so much morally *lived*, as metaphysically *investigated*. Never,
s, was there a class of writers, so clear and well-ordered, yet so totally
te, to all appearance, of any patriotic affection, nay, of any human af-
whatever. The French wits of the period were as unpatriotic; but
eneral deficiency in moral principle, not to say their avowed sen-
and unbelief in all virtue, strictly so called, render this accountable
n. We hope there is a patriotism founded on something better than
ice; that our country may be dear to us without injury to our phi-
y; that in loving and justly prizing all other lands, we may prize
and yet love before all others, our own stern motherland, and the
ble structure of social and moral life, which mind has through long
en building up for us there. Surely there is nourishment for the better
man's heart in all this: surely the roots, that have fixed themselves
very core of man's being, may be so cultivated as to grow up not
iers, but into roses, in the field of his life! Our Scottish sages have
h propensities: the field of their life shows neither briers nor roses:
ly a flat, continuous thrashing floor for logic, whereon all questions,
he "Doctrine of Rent," to the "Natural History of Religion," are
ed and sifted with the same mechanical impartiality!

h Sir Walter Scott at the head of our literature, it cannot be denied
uch of this evil is past, or rapidily passing away: our chief literary
whatever other faults they may have, no longer live among us like
ch colony, or some knot of Propaganda missionaries; but like natural-

born subjects of the soil, partaking and sympathising in all our attachments, humours, and habits. Our literature no longer grows in water, but in mould, and with the true racy virtues of the soil and climate. How much of this change may be due to Burns, or to any other individual, it might be difficult to estimate. Direct literary imitation of Burns was not to be looked for. But his example, in the fearless adoption of domestic subjects, could not but operate from afar; and certainly in no heart did the love of country ever burn with a warmer glow than in that of Burns: "a tide of Scottish prejudice," as he modestly calls this deep and generous feeling, "had been poured along his veins; and he felt that it would boil there till the floodgates shut in eternal rest." It seemed to him, as if *he* could do so little for his country, and yet would so gladly have done all. One small province stood open for him; that of Scottish song, and how eagerly he entered on it; how devotedly he laboured there! In his most toilsome journeyings, this object never quits him; it is the little happy valley of his care-worn heart. In the gloom of his own affliction, he eagerly searches after some lonely brother of the muse, and rejoices to snatch one other name from the oblivion that was covering it! These were early feelings, and they abode with him to the end.

——"a wish, (I mind its power,)
A wish, that to my latest hour
Will strongly heave my breast;
That I, for poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some useful plan or book could make,
Or sing a sang at least.
The rough bur Thistle spreading wide
Amang the bearded bear,
I turn'd my weeding-clips aside,
And spared the symbol dear."

But to leave the mere literary character of Burns, which has already detained us too long, we cannot but think that the life he willed, and was fated to lead among his fellow men, is both more interesting and instructive than any of his written works. These poems are but like little rhymed fragments scattered here and there in the grand unrhymed romance of his earthly existence; and it is only when intercalated in this at their proper places, that they attain their full measure of significance. And this too, alas, was but a fragment! The plan of a mighty edifice had been sketched; some columns, porticoes, firm masses of building, stand completed; the rest more or less clearly indicated; with many a far-stretching tendency, which only studious and friendly eyes can now trace towards the purposed termination. For the work is broken off in the middle, almost in the beginning; and rises among us, beautiful and sad, at once unfinished and a ruin! If charitable judgment was necessary in estimating his poems, and justice required that the aim and the manifest power to fulfil it, must often be accepted for the fulfilment; much more is this the case in regard to his life, the sum and result of all his endeavours, where his difficulties came upon him not in detail only, but in mass; and so much has been left unaccomplished, nay, was mistaken, and altogether marred.

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He loved poetry warmly, and in his heart—could he but have loved it purely, and with his whole undivided heart, it had been well. For Poetry as Burns could have followed it, is but another form of Wisdom, of Religion; *is itself* Wisdom and Religion. But this also was denied him. His

stry is a stray vagrant gleam, which will not be extinguished within m, yet rises not to be the true light of his path, but is often a wildfire t misleads him. It was not necessary for Burns to be rich, to be, or to m, "independent;" but *it was* necessary for him to be at one with his n heart; to place what was highest in his nature, highest also in his life; to seek within himself for that consistency and sequence, which external nts would for ever refuse him." He was born a poet; poetry was the estial element of his being, and should have been the soul of his whole deavours. Lifted into that serene ether, whither he had wings given n to mount, he would have needed no other elevation: poverty, neglect, d all evil, save the desecration of himself and his art, were a small matter him; the pride and the passions of the world lay far beneath his feet; d he looked down alike on noble and slave, on prince and beggar, and that wore the stamp of man, with clear recognition, with brotherly ction, with sympathy, with pity. Nay, we question whether for his ture as a poet, poverty, and much suffering for a season, were not ab-utely advantageous. Great men, in looking back over their lives, have tified to that effect. "I would not for much," says Jean Paul, "that had been born richer." And yet Paul's birth was poor enough; for, in nother place, he adds:—"The prisoner's allowance is bread and water; nd I had often only the latter." But the gold that is refined in the hottest rnace comes out the purest; or, as he has himself expressed it, "the ca-ary-bird sings sweeter, the longer it has been trained in a darkened cage."

A man like Burns might have divided his hours between poetry and irtuous industry; industry which all true feeling sanctions, nay, prescribes, nd which has a beauty, for that cause, beyond the pomp of thrones: but to ivide his hours between poetry and rich men's banquets, was an ill-starred nd inauspicious attempt. How could he be at ease at such banquets? What had he to do there, mingling his music with the coarse roar of alto-ther earthly voices, and brightening the thick smoke of intoxication with e lent him from heaven? Was it his aim to *enjoy* life? to-morrow he ust go drudge as an exciseman! We wonder not that Burns became oody, indignant, and at times an offender against certain rules of society; ut rather that he did not grow utterly frantic, and run *a muck* against hem all. How could a man, so falsely placed, by his own or others' fault, ver know contentment or peaceable diligence for an hour? What he did, nder such perverse guidance, and what he forbore to do, alike fill us with stonishment at the natural strength and worth of his character.

Doubtless there was a remedy for this perverseness: but not in others; nly in himself; least of all in simple increase of wealth and worldly "respectability." We hope we have now heard enough about the efficacy f wealth for poetry, and to make poets happy. Nay, have we not seen nother instance of it in these very days? Byron, a man of an endowment nsiderably less ethereal than that of Burns, is born in the rank not of a cottish ploughman, but of an English peer: the highest worldly honours, he fairest worldly career, are his by inheritance; the richest harvest of me he soon reaps, in another province, by his own hand. And what oes all this avail him? Is he happy, is he good, is he true? Alas, he has n poet's soul, and strives towards the Infinite and the Eternal; and soon eels that all this is but mounting to the house-top to reach the stars! Like urns, he is only a proud man; might like him have "purchased a pocket-opy of Milton to study the character of Satan;" for Satan also is Byron's

grand exemplar, the hero of his poetry, and the model apparently of his conduct. As in Burns's case, too, the celestial element will not mingle with the clay of earth; both poet and man of the world he must be; vulgar Ambition will not live kindly with poetic Adoration; he *cannot* serve God and Mammon. Byron, like Burns, is not happy; nay, he is the most wretched of all men. His life is falsely arranged; the fire that is in him is not a strong, still, central fire, warming into beauty the products of a world; but it is the mad fire of a volcano; and now—we look sadly into the ashes of a crater, which, ere long, will fill itself with snow!

Byron and Burns were sent forth as missionaries to their generation, to teach it a higher doctrine, a purer truth: they had a message to deliver, which left them no rest till it was accomplished; in dim throes of pain this divine behest lay smouldering within them; for they knew not what it meant, and felt it only in mysterious anticipation, and they had to die without articulately uttering it. They are in the camp of the unconverted. Yet not as high messengers of rigorous though benignant truth, but as still flattering singers, and in pleasant fellowship will they live there: they are first adulated, then persecuted; they find no peace for themselves, but only death and the peace of the grave. We confess, it is not without a certain mournful awe that we view the fate of those noble souls, so richly gifted, yet ruined to so little purpose with all their gifts. It seems to us there is a stern moral taught in this piece of history—*twice* told us in our own time! Surely to men of like genius, if there be any such, it carries with it a lesson of deep impressive significance. Surely it would become such a man, furnished for the highest of all enterprises, that of being the Poet of his Age, to consider well what it is that he attempts and in what spirit he attempts it. For the words of Milton are true in all times, and were never truer than in this: "He who would write heroic poems, must make his whole life a heroic poem." If he cannot first so make his life, then let him hasten from this arena; for neither its lofty glories, nor its fearful perils, are for him. Let him dwindle into a modish balladmonger; let him worship and be-sing the idols of the time, and the time will not fail to reward him—if, indeed, he can endure to live in that capacity! Byron and Burns could not live as idol priests, but the fire of their own heart consumed them: and better it was for them that they could not; for it is not in the favour of the great, or of the small, but in a life of truth, and in the inexpugnable citadel of his own soul, that a Byron's or a Burns's strength must lie. Let the great stand aloof from him, or know how to reverence him. Beautiful is the union of wealth with favour and furtherance for literature; like the costliest flower-jar enclosing the loveliest amaranth. Yet let not the relation be mistaken. A true poet is not one whom they can hire by money or flattery to be a minister of their pleasures, their writer of occasional verses, their purveyor of table-wit; he cannot be their menial, he cannot even be their partisan. At the peril of both parties let no such union be attempted! Will a courser of the sun work softly in the harness of a dray-horse? His hoofs are of fire, and his path is through the heavens, bringing light to all lands; will he lumber on mud highways dragging ale for earthly appetites, from door to door?

But we must stop short in these considerations, which would lead us into boundless lengths. We had something to say on the public moral character of Burns; but this also we must forbear. We are far from regarding him as guilty before the world, as guiltier than the average; nay, from doubting

that he is less guilty than one of ten thousand. Tried at a tribunal far more rigid than that where the *Plebiscita* of common civic reputations are pronounced, he has seemed to us even there less worthy of blame than of pity and wonder. But the world is habitually unjust in its judgments of such men; unjust on many grounds, of which this one may be stated as the substance:—It decides, like a court of law, by dead statutes; and not positively but negatively, less on what is done right, than on what is, or is not, done wrong. Not the few inches of deflection from the mathematical orbit, which are so easily measured, but the *ratio* of these to the whole diameter constitutes the real aberration. This orbit may be a planet's, its diameter the breadth of the solar system; or it may be a city hippodrome; nay, the circle of a gin-horse, its diameter a score of feet or paces. But the inches of deflection only are measured; and it is assumed that the diameter of the gin-horse and that of the planet will yield the same ratio when compared with them. Here lies the root of many a blind cruel condemnation of Burnses, Swifts, Rousseaus, which one never listens to with approval. Granted, the ship comes into harbour with shrouds and tackle damaged; and the pilot is, therefore, blameworthy; for he has not been all-wise and all-powerful; but to know *how* blameworthy, tell us first whether his voyage has been round the globe, or only to Ramsgate and the Isle of Dogs.

With our readers in general, with men of right feeling anywhere, we are not required to plead for Burns. In pitying admiration, he lies enshrined in all our hearts, in a far nobler mausoleum than that one of marble; neither will his works, even as they are, pass away from the memory of men. While the Shakspeares and Miltons roll on like mighty rivers through the country of Thought, bearing fleets of traffickers and assiduous pearl-fishers on their waves; this little Valclusa Fountain will also arrest our eye: for this also is of Nature's own and most cunning workmanship, bursts from the depths of the earth with a full-gushing current into the light of day; and often will the traveller turn aside to drink of its clear waters, and muse among its rocks and pines.*

LORD BYRON.†

If the finest poetry be that which leaves the deepest impression on the minds of its readers—and this is not the worst test of its excellence—Lord Byron, we think, must be allowed to take precedence of all his dis-

* The foregoing extracts form only a part of the beautiful essay from which they are taken. If not the most discriminating, it is certainly the most eloquent and impassioned tribute of praise ever bestowed on the intellectual character of Robert Burns. Compared with Mr. Jeffrey's criticism on the Scottish poet, it will appear too lavish in its encomiums, and in its style more dazzling than polished,—more ambitious than chaste,—more mystical than simple and pure. The northern critic may have censured without sufficient cause, and praised without cordiality; but it must be admitted, by every candid judge, that his review of Burns as a poet is written with all that vigour of thought and felicity of language for which the former editor of the Edinburgh Review is so justly celebrated. Amongst the many valuable dissertations on the genius of Burns which Lockhart's life of the poet elicited from the periodical press, there was one of surpassing talent published in Blackwood's Magazine. Professor Wilson received the credit of writing it. It is remarkable for strength, brilliancy, feeling, and enthusiasm,—qualities that are to be found in all the productions of the author of the "Isle of Palms."

† Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto iii. The Prisoner of Chillon, and other Poems. Vol. xxvii. p. 277. December, 1816.

tinguished contemporaries. He has not the variety of Scott—nor the delicacy of Campbell—nor the absolute truth of Crabbe—nor the polished sparkling of Moore; but in force of diction, and inextinguishable energy of sentiment, he clearly surpasses them all. "Words that breathe, and thoughts that burn," are not merely the ornaments, but the common staple of his poetry; and he is not inspired or impressive only in some happy passages, but through the whole body and tissue of his composition. It was an unavoidable condition, perhaps, of this higher excellence, that his scene should be narrow, and his persons few. To compass such ends as he had in view, it was necessary to reject all ordinary agents, and all trivial combinations. He could not possibly be amusing, or ingenious, or playful; or hope to maintain the requisite pitch of interest by the recitation of sprightly adventures, or the opposition of common characters. To produce great effects, he felt that it was necessary to deal only with the greater passions—with the exaltations of a daring fancy, and the errors of a lofty intellect—with the pride, the terrors, and the agonies of strong emotion — the fire and air alone of our human elements.

In this respect, and in his general notion of the end and the elements of poetry, we have sometimes thought that his views fell more in with those of the Lake poets, than of any other party in the poetical commonwealth; and, in some of his later productions especially, it is impossible not to be struck with his occasional approaches to the style and manner of this class of writers. Lord Byron, however, it should be observed, like all other persons of a quick sense of beauty, and sure enough of their own originality to be in no fear of paltry imputations, is a great mimic of styles and manners, and a great borrower of external character. He and Mr. Scott are full of imitations of all the writers from whom they have ever derived gratification; and the two most original writers of the age might appear, to superficial observers, to be the most deeply indebted to their predecessors. In this particular instance, we have no fault to find with Lord Byron: for undoubtedly the finer passages of Wordsworth and Southey have in them wherewithal to give an impulse to the utmost ambition of rival genius; and their diction and manner of writing is frequently both striking and original. But we must say, that it would afford us still greater pleasure to find these tuneful gentlemen returning the compliment which Lord Byron has here paid to their talents, and forming themselves on the model rather of his imitations than of their own originals. In these imitations they will find that, though he is sometimes abundantly mystical, he never, or at least very rarely, indulges in absolute nonsense—never takes his lofty flights upon mean or ridiculous occasions—and, above all, never dilutes his strong conceptions and magnificent imaginations with a flood of oppressive verbosity. On the contrary, he is, of all living writers, the most concise and condensed; and, we would fain hope, may go far, by his example, to redeem the great reproach of our modern literature — its intolerable prolixity and redundance. In his nervous and manly lines, we find no elaborate amplification of common sentiments—no ostentatious polishing of pretty expressions; and we really think that the brilliant success which has rewarded his disdain of these paltry artifices, should put to shame for ever that puling and self-admiring race, who can live through half a volume on the stock of a single thought, and expatiate over diverse fair quarto pages with the details of one tedious description.—In Lord Byron, on the contrary, we have a perpetual stream of thick-

coming fancies—an eternal spring of fresh-blown images, which seem called into existence by the sudden flash of those glowing thoughts and overwhelming emotions, that struggle for expression through the whole flow of his poetry — and impart to a diction that is often abrupt and irregular, a force and a charm which seem frequently to realise all that is said of inspiration.

With all these undoubted claims to our admiration, however, it is impossible to deny that the noble author before us has still something to learn, and a good deal to correct. He is frequently abrupt and careless, and sometimes obscure. There are marks, occasionally, of effort and straining after an emphasis which is generally spontaneous ;—and, above all, there is far too great a monotony in the moral colouring of his pictures, and too much repetition of the same sentiments and maxims. He delights too exclusively in the delineation of a certain morbid exaltation of character and of feeling,—a sort of demoniacal sublimity, not without some traits of the ruined archangel. He is haunted almost perpetually with the image of a being feeding and fed upon by violent passions, and the recollections of catastrophes they have occasioned : and, though worn out by their past indulgence, unable to sustain the burden of an existence which they do not continue to animate—full of pride and revenge and obduracy—disdaining life and death, and mankind and himself—and trampling, in his scorn, not only upon the falsehood and formality of polished life, but upon its tame virtues and slavish devotion : yet envying, by fits, the selfish beings he despises, and melting into mere softness and compassion when the helplessness of childhood or the frailty of woman make an appeal to his generosity. Such is the person with whom we are called upon almost exclusively to sympathise in all the greater productions of this distinguished writer :—in Childe Harold —in the Corsair—in Lara—in the siege of Corinth—in Parisina, and in most of the smaller pieces.

It is impossible to represent such a character better than Lord Byron has done in all these productions,—or indeed to represent any thing more terrible in its anger, or more attractive in its relenting. In point of effect, we readily admit, that no one character can be more poetical or impressive :—but it is really too much to find the scene perpetually filled by one character—not only in all the acts, but in all the different pieces ;—and, grand and impressive as it is, we feel at last that these very qualities make some relief more indispensable, and oppress the spirits of ordinary mortals with too deep an impression of awe and repulsion. There is too much guilt, in short, and too much gloom, in the leading character ;—and though it be a fine thing to gaze, now and then, on stormy seas, and thunder-shaken mountains, we should prefer passing our days in sheltered valleys, and by the murmur of calmer waters. We are aware that these metaphors may be turned against us—and that, without metaphor, it may be said that men do not *pass their days* in reading poetry,—and that, as they may look into Lord Byron only about as often as they look abroad upon tempests, they have no more reason to complain of him for being grand and gloomy, than to complain of the same qualities in the glaciers and volcanoes which they go so far to visit. Painters have often gained great reputation by their representations of tigers and other ferocious animals, or of caverns and banditti,—and poets should be allowed, without reproach, to indulge in analogous exercises. We are far from thinking that there is no weight in these considerations ; and feel how plausibly it may be said, that we have

no better reason for a great part of our complaint, than that an author, to whom we are already very greatly indebted, has chosen rather to please himself than us in the use he makes of his talents. This, no doubt, seems both unreasonable and ungrateful; but it is nevertheless true, that a public benefactor becomes a debtor to the public; and is, in some degree, responsible for the employment of those gifts which seem to be conferred upon him, not merely for his own delight, but for the delight and improvement of his fellows through all generations. Independent of this, however, we think there is a reply to the apology. A great living poet is not like a distant volcano, or an occasional tempest. He is a volcano in the heart of our land, and a cloud that hangs over our dwellings; and we have some cause to complain, if, instead of genial warmth and grateful shade, he darkens and inflames our atmosphere with perpetual explosions of fiery torrents and pitchy vapours. Lord Byron's poetry, in short, is too attractive and too famous to lie dormant or inoperative; and therefore, if it produce any painful or pernicious effects, there will be murmurs, and ought to be suggestions of alteration. Now, though an artist may draw fighting tigers and hungry lions in as lively and natural a way as he can, without giving any encouragement to human ferocity, or even much alarm to human fear, the case is somewhat different, when a poet represents men with tiger-like dispositions—and yet more so, when he exhausts the resources of his genius to make this terrible being interesting and attractive, and to represent all the lofty virtues as the natural allies of their ferocity. It is still worse when he proceeds to show, that all these precious gifts of dauntless courage, strong affection, and high imagination, are not only akin to guilt, but the parents of misery;—and that those only have any chance of tranquillity or happiness in this world, whom it is the object of his poetry to make us shun and despise.

These, it appears to us, are not merely errors in taste, but perversions of morality; and, as a great poet is necessarily a Moral Teacher, and gives forth his ethical lessons, in general, with far more effect and authority than any of his graver brethren, he is peculiarly liable to the censures reserved for those who turn the means of improvement to purposes of corruption.

It may no doubt be said, that poetry in general tends less to the useful than the splendid qualities of our nature—that a character poetically good has long been distinguished from one that is morally so—and that, ever since the time of Achilles, our sympathies, on such occasions, have been chiefly engrossed by persons whose deportment is by no means exemplary, and who in many points approach to the temperament of Lord Byron's ideal hero. There is some truth in this suggestion also. But other poets, in the *first* place, do not allow their favorites so outrageous a monopoly of the glory and interest of the piece—and sin less therefore against the laws either of poetical or distributive justice. In the *second* place, their heroes are neither so bad nor so good as Lord Byron's—and do not indeed very much exceed the standard of truth and nature in either of the extremes. His, however, are as monstrous and unnatural as centaurs and hippogriffs—and must ever figure in the eye of sober reason as so many bright and hateful impossibilities. But the most important distinction is, that the other poets who deal in peccant heroes, neither feel nor express that ardent affection for them, which is visible in the whole of this author's delineations, but merely make use of them as necessary agents in the extraordinary adventures they have to detail, and persons whose mingled vices

nd virtues are requisite to bring about the catastrophe of their story. In ord Byron, however, the interest of the story, where there happens to one, which is not always the case, is uniformly postponed to that of the haracter itself—into which he enters so deeply, and with so extraordinary fondness, that he generally continues to speak in its language, after it has been dismissed from the stage; and to inculcate, on his own authority, the ame sentiments which had been previously recommended by its example. We do not consider it as unfair, therefore, to say that Lord Byron appears o us to be the zealous apostle of a certain fierce and magnificent misanhropy, which has already saddened his poetry with too deep a shade, and ot only led to a great misapplication of great talents, but contributed to ender popular some very false estimates of the constituents of human happiness and merit. It is irksome, however, to dwell upon observations so eneral—and we shall probably have better means of illustrating these remarks, if they are really well founded, when we come to speak of the particular publications by which they have been suggested.

We had the good fortune, we believe, to be among the first who proclaimed the rising of a new luminary, on the appearance of Childe Harold n the poetical horizon,—and we pursued his course with due attention hrough several of the constellations. If we have lately omitted to record is progress with the same accuracy, it is by no means because we have egarded it with more indifference, or supposed that it would be less interesting to the public—but because it was so extremely conspicuous as no onger to require the notices of an official observer. In general, we do not think it necessary, nor indeed quite fair, to oppress our readers with n account of works, which are as well known to them as to ourselves, or a repetition of sentiments in which all the world is agreed.—Wherever a work, therefore, is very popular, and where the general opinion of its merits appears to be substantially right, we think ourselves at liberty to leave it out of our chronicle, without incurring the censure of neglect or inattention. A very rigorous application of this maxim might have saved our readers the trouble of reading what we now write; and, to confess the truth, we write it rather to gratify ourselves than with the hope of giving them much information. At the same time, some short notice of the progress of such a writer ought perhaps to appear in his contemporary journals, as a tribute due to his eminence; and a zealous critic can scarcely set about examining the merits of any work, or the nature of its reception by the public, without speedily discovering very urgent cause for his admonitions both to the author and his admirers.†

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The most considerable of Lord Byron's most recent publications, is the Third Canto of Childe Harold, a work which has the disadvantage of all continuations, in admitting of little absolute novelty in the plan of the work, or the cast of its character; and must, besides, remind all Lord Byron's readers of the extraordinary effect produced by the sudden blazing forth of his genius upon their first introduction to that title. In spite of all this, however, we are persuaded that this Third Part of the poem will not be

† The abstract of the poems, and the extracts which follow, I am obliged to reject, though the remarks of the reviewer on the several passages display an originality of conception, a richness of imagination, and a mastery over language, which no other modern critic possesses in so eminent a degree as Mr. Jeffrey. I have given, without abridgment, the reviewer's opinion of the Third Canto of Childe Harold, and his reasons for dissenting from some of the sentiments so forcibly expressed by the noble poet in his splendid apostrophe to Napoleon.

pronounced inferior to either of the former; and, we think, will probably be ranked above them by those who have been most delighted with the whole. The great success of this singular production, indeed, has always appeared to us an extraordinary proof of its merits; for, with all its genius, it does not belong to a sort of poetry that rises easily to popularity. It has no story or action—very little variety of character—and a great deal of reasoning and reflection of no very attractive tenor. It is substantially a contemplative and ethical work, diversified with fine description, and adorned or overshaded by one emphatic person, who is sometimes the author, and sometimes the object, of the reflections on which the interest is chiefly rested. It required, no doubt, great force of writing, and a decided tone of originality, to recommend a performance of this sort so powerfully as this has been recommended to public notice and admiration—and those high characteristics belong perhaps still more eminently to the part that is now before us, than to any of the former. There is the same stern and lofty disdain of mankind, and their ordinary pursuits and enjoyments, with the same bright gaze on Nature, and the same magic power of giving interest and effect to her delineations—but mixed up, we think, with deeper and more matured reflections, and a more intense sensibility to all that is grand or lovely in the external world. Harold, in short, is somewhat older since he last appeared upon the scene—and while the vigour of his intellect has been confirmed, and his confidence in his own opinions increased, his mind has also become more sensitive; and his misanthropy, thus softened over by habits of calmer contemplation, appears less active and impatient, even although more deeply rooted, than before. Undoubtedly the finest parts of the poem before us, are those which thus embody the weight of his moral sentiments, or disclose the lofty sympathy which binds the despiser of Man to the glorious aspects of Nature. It is in these, we think, that the great attractions of the work consist and the strength of the author's genius is seen. The narrative and description are of far inferior interest. With reference to the sentiments and opinions, however, which thus give its distinguishing character to the piece, we must say that it seems no longer possible to ascribe them to the ideal person whose name it bears, or to any other than the author himself. Lord Byron, we think, has formerly complained of those who identified him with his hero, or supposed that Harold was but the expositor of his own feelings and opinions;—and in noticing the former portions of the work, we thought it unbecoming to give any countenance to such a supposition. In this last part, however, it is really impracticable to distinguish them. Not only do the author and his hero travel and reflect together; but, in truth, we scarcely ever have any notice to which of them the sentiments so energetically expressed are to be ascribed; and in those which are unequivocally given as those of the noble author himself, there is the very same tone of misanthropy, sadness, and scorn, which we were formerly willing to regard as a part of the assumed costume of the Childe. We are far from supposing, indeed, that Lord Byron would disavow any of these sentiments; and though there are some which we must ever think it most unfortunate to entertain, and others which it appears improper to have published, the greater part are admirable, and cannot be perused without emotion even by those to whom they may appear erroneous.

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There is an apostrophe to Napoleon, graduating into a series of general

tions, expressed with infinite beauty and earnestness, and illustrated nother cluster of magical images;—but breathing the very essence of nthropical disdain, and embodying opinions which we conceive not to s erroneous than revolting. After noticing the strange combination of leur and littleness which seemed to form the character of that emi- individual, the author proceeds —

" Yet well thy soul hath brook'd the turning tide
With that untaught innate philosophy,
Which, be it wisdom, coldness, or deep pride,
Is gall and wormwood to an enemy.
When the whole host of hatred stood hard by,
To watch and mock thee shrinking, thou hast smiled
With a sedate and all-enduring eye;—
When Fortune fled her spoil'd and favourite child,
He stood unbow'd beneath the ills upon him piled.

" Sager than in thy fortunes; for in them
Ambition steel'd thee on too far to show
That just habitual scorn which could contemn
Men and their thoughts;. 'twas wise to feel, not so
To wear it ever on thy lip and brow,
And spurn the instruments thou wert to use
Till they were turn'd unto thine overthrow:
'Tis but a worthless world to win or lose;
So hath it proved to thee, and all such lot who choose.

" But quiet to quick bosoms is a hell,
And *there* hath been thy bane; there is a fire
And motion of the soul which will not dwell
In its own narrow being, but aspire
Beyond the fitting medium of desire;
And, but once kindled, quenchless evermore,
Preys upon high adventure, nor can tire
Of aught but rest; a fever at the core,
Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore.

" This makes the madmen who have made men mad
By their contagion; Conquerors and Kings,
Founders of sects and systems, to whom add
Sophists, Bards, Statesmen, all unquiet things
Which stir too strongly the soul's secret springs,
And are themselves the fools to those they fool;
Envied, yet how unenviable! what stings
Are theirs! One breast laid open were a school
Which would unteach mankind the lust to shine or rule!

" Their breath is agitation, and their life
A storm whereon they ride, to sink at last;
And yet so nursed and bigoted to strife,
That should their days, surviving perils past,
Melt to calm twilight, they feel overcast
With sorrow and supineness, and so die;
Even as a flame unfed, which runs to waste
With its own flickering, or a sword laid by,
Which eats into itself, and rusts ingloriously.

" He who ascends to mountain-tops, shall find
The loftiest peaks most wrapt in clouds and snow;
He who *surpasses* or *subdues* mankind,
Must look down on the hate of those below.
Though high *above* the sun of glory glow,
And far *beneath* the earth and ocean spread,
Round him are icy rocks, and loudly blow
Contending tempests on his naked head,
And thus reward the toils which to those summits led."

his is splendidly written, no doubt—but we trust it is not true;—and is delivered with much more than poetical earnestness, and recurs, ed, *in other forms in various* parts of the volume, we must really be

allowed to enter our dissent somewhat at large. With regard to conquerors, we wish with all our hearts that the case were as the noble author represents it: but we greatly fear they are neither half so unhappy, nor half so much hated, as they should be. On the contrary, it seems plain enough that they are very commonly idolised and admired, even by those on whom they trample; and we suspect, moreover, that in general they pass their time rather agreeably, and derive considerable satisfaction from the ruin and desolation of the world. From Macedonia's Madman to the Swede, from Nimrod to Bonaparte, the hunters of men have pursued their sport with as much gaiety, and as little remorse, as the hunters of other animals; and have lived as cheerily in their days of action, and as comfortably in their repose, as the followers of better pursuits. For this and for the fame which they have generally enjoyed, they are obviously indebted to the great interests connected with their employment, and the mental excitement which belongs to its hopes and hazards. It would be strange, therefore, if the other active but more innocent spirits whom Lord Byron has here placed in the same predicament, and who share all their sources of enjoyment, without the guilt and the hardness which they cannot fail of contracting, should be more miserable or more unfriended than those splendid curses of their kind—and it would be *passing strange*, and pitiful, if the most precious gifts of Providence should produce only unhappiness, and mankind regard with hostility their greatest benefactors. We do not believe in any such prodigies. Great vanity and ambition may indeed lead to feverish and restless efforts—to jealousies, to hate and to mortification—but these are only their effects when united to inferior abilities. It is not those, in short, who actually surpass mankind, that are unhappy, but those who struggle in vain to surpass them; and this moody temper, which eats into itself from within, and provokes fair and unfair opposition from without, is generally the result of pretensions which outgo the merits by which they are supported—and disappointments, that may be clearly traced, not to the excess of genius, but its defect.

It will be found, we believe, accordingly, that the master spirits of their age have always escaped the unhappiness which is here supposed to be the inevitable lot of extraordinary talents; and that this strange tax upon genius has only been levied upon those who held the secondary shares of it. Men of truly great powers of mind have generally been cheerful, social, and indulgent;—while a tendency to sentimental whining, or fierce intolerance, may be ranked among the surest symptoms of little souls and inferior intellects. In the whole list of our English poets, we can only remember Shenstone and Savage—two, certainly, of the lowest—who were querulous and discontented. Cowley, indeed, used to call himself melancholy;—but he was full of conceits and affectations, and has nothing to make us prou of him. Shakspeare, the greatest of them all, was evidently of a free and joyous temperament;—and so was Chaucer, their common master. The same disposition appears to have predominated in Fletcher, Jonson, and their great contemporaries. The genius of Milton partook something of the austerity of the party to which he belonged, and of the controversies in which he was involved; but even when fallen on evil days and evil tongues, his spirit seems to have retained its serenity as well as its dignity;—and in his private life, as well as in his poetry, the majesty of a high character is *tempered with* great sweetness and practical wisdom. In the succeeding *age, our poets* were but too gay; and though we forbear to speak of living

authors, we know enough of them to say with confidence, that to be miserable or to be hated is not now, any more than heretofore, the common lot of those who excel.

If this, however, be the case with poets, confessedly the most irritable and fantastic of all men of genius—and of poets, too, bred and born in the gloomy climate of England, it is not likely that those who have surpassed their fellows in other ways, or in other regions, have been more distinguished for unhappiness. Were Socrates and Plato, the greatest philosophers of antiquity, remarkable for unsocial or gloomy tempers?—was Bacon, the greatest in modern times?—was Sir Thomas More—or Erasmus—or Hume—or Voltaire?—was Newton—or Fénélon?—was Henry IV., the paragon of kings and conquerors?—was Fox, the most ardent, and, in the vulgar sense, the least successful, of statesmen? These, and men like these, are undoubtedly the lights and the boast of the world. Yet there was no alloy of misanthropy or gloom in their genius. They did not disdain the men they had surpassed; and neither feared nor experienced their hostility. Some detractors they might have, from envy or misapprehension; but, beyond all doubt, the prevailing sentiments in respect to them have always been those of gratitude and admiration; and the error of public judgment, where it has erred, has much oftener been to overrate than to undervalue the merits of those who had claims on their good opinion. On the whole, we are far from thinking that eminent men are happier than those who glide through life in peaceful obscurity; but it is their eminence, and the consequences of it, rather than the mental superiority by which it is obtained, that interferes with their enjoyment. Distinction, however won, usually leads to a passion for more distinction; and is apt to engage us in laborious efforts and anxious undertakings: and those, even when successful, seldom repay, in our judgment at least, the ease, the leisure and tranquillity, of which they require the sacrifice. But it really passes our imagination to conceive, that the very highest degrees of intellectual vigour, or fancy, or sensibility, should of themselves be productive either of unhappiness or general dislike.†

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Beautiful as this poetry is, it is a relief at last to close the volume. We cannot maintain our accustomed tone of levity, or even speak like calm literary judges, in the midst of these agonising traces of a wounded and distempered spirit. Even our admiration is at last swallowed up in a most painful feeling of pity and of wonder. It is impossible to mistake these for fictitious sorrows, conjured up for the purpose of poetical effect. There is a dreadful tone of sincerity, and an energy that cannot be counterfeited, in the expression of wretchedness and alienation from human kind, which occurs in every page of this publication; and as the author has at last spoken out in his own person, and unbosomed his griefs a great deal too freely to his readers, the offence now would be, to entertain a doubt of their reality. We certainly have no hope of preaching him into philanthropy and cheerfulness; but it is impossible not to mourn over such a catastrophe of such a mind, or to see the prodigal gifts of Nature, Fortune, and Fame, thus turned

† The only critique on the poetry of Byron that can be compared with this brilliant encomium on his genius, is the review of the third canto of Childe Harold in No. xxxi. of the Quarterly Review. It was written by Sir Walter Scott, and has been since reprinted in his Miscellaneous Works. Is there not *something truly delightful* in the exhibition thus afforded of one distinguished poet *manifesting a generous desire to increase*, by his cordial and disinterested praise, the fame of *his rival in the same honourable field* of competition?

to bitterness, without an oppressive feeling of impatience, mortification and surprise. Where there are such elements, however, it is equally impossible to despair that they may yet enter into happier combinations,—or not to hope that "this puissant spirit"

> "yet shall reascend,
> Self-raised, and repossess its native seat."

ESTIMATE OF LORD BYRON'S CHARACTER AS A DRAMATIC POET.*

It must be a more difficult thing to write a good play—or even a good dramatic poem—than we had imagined. Not that we should, *à priori*, have imagined it to be very easy; but it is impossible not to be struck with the fact, that, in comparatively rude times, when the resources of the art had been less carefully considered, and Poetry certainly had not collected all her materials, success seems to have been more frequently and far more easily obtained. From the middle of Elizabeth's reign till the end of James's, the drama formed by far the most brilliant and beautiful part of our poetry,—and, indeed, of our literature in general. From that period to the Revolution, it lost a part of its splendour and originality; but still continued to occupy the most conspicuous and considerable place in our literary annals. For the last century, it has been quite otherwise—our poetry has ceased almost entirely to be dramatic; and though men of great name and great talent have occasionally adventured into this once fertile field, they have reaped no laurels, and left no trophies behind them. The genius of Dryden appears nowhere to so little advantage as in his tragedies; and the contrast is truly humiliating, when, in a presumptuous attempt to heighten the colouring or enrich the simplicity of Shakspeare, he bedaubs with obscenity, or deforms with rant, the genuine passion and profligacy of Antony and Cleopatra; or intrudes on the enchanted solitude of Prospero and his daughter, with the tones of worldly gallantry, or the caricatures of affected simplicity. Otway, with the sweet and mellow diction of the former age, had none of its force, variety, or invention. Its decaying fires burst forth in some strong and irregular flashes, in the disorderly scenes of Lee; and sunk at last in the ashes and scarcely glowing embers of Rowe.

Since his time—till very lately—the school of our ancient dramatists has been deserted: and we can scarcely say that any new one has been established. Instead of the irregular and comprehensive plot—the rich discursive dialogue—the ramblings of fancy—the magic creations of poetry—the rapid succession of incidents and characters—the soft, flexible and ever-varying diction—and the flowing, continuous, and easy versification which characterised those masters of the golden time, we had tame, formal, laborate, and stately compositions—meagre stories—few personages—characters decorous and consistent, but without nature or spirit—a guarded, timid, classical diction—ingenious and methodical disquisitions—turgid or sententious declamations—and a solemn and monotonous strain of versification. Nor

* *Sardanapalus. A Tragedy*, &c. &c.—Vol. xxxvi. p. 413. February, 1822.

can this be ascribed, even plausibly, to any decay of genius among us; for the most remarkable failures have fallen on the highest talents. We have already hinted at the miscarriages of Dryden. The exquisite taste and fine observation of Addison produced only the solemn mawkishness of Cato. The beautiful fancy and generous affections of Thomson were chilled and withered as soon as he touched the verge of the Drama, where his name is associated with a mass of verbose puerility, which it is difficult to conceive could ever have proceeded from the author of the Seasons and the Castle of Indolence. Even the mighty intellect, the eloquent morality and lofty diction of Johnson, which gave too tragic and magnificent a tone to his ordinary discourse, failedal together to support him in his attempt to write actual tragedy; and Irene is not only unworthy of the imitator of Juvenal and the author of Rasselas and the Lives of the Poets, but is absolutely, and in itself, nothing better than a tissue of wearisome and unimpassioned declamations. We have named the most celebrated names in our literature, since the decline of the drama, almost to our own days; and if *they* have neither lent any new honours to the stage, nor borrowed any from it, it is needless to say that those who adventured with weaker powers had no better fortune. The Mourning Bride of Congreve, the Revenge of Young, and the Douglas of Home (we cannot add the Mysterious Mother of Walpole—even to please Lord Byron), are almost the only tragedies of the last age that are familiar to the present; and they are evidently the works of a feebler and more effeminate generation—indicating, as much by their exaggerations as by their timidity, their own consciousness of inferiority to their great predecessors—whom they affected, however, not to imitate, but to supplant.

But the native taste of our people was not thus to be seduced and perverted: and when the wits of Queen Anne's time had lost the authority of living authors, it asserted itself by a fond recurrence to its original standards, and a resolute neglect of the more regular and elaborate dramas by which they had been succeeded. Shakspeare, whom it had been the fashion to decry and even ridicule, as the poet of a rude and barbarous age,* was reinstated in his old supremacy: and when his legitimate progeny could no longer be found at home, his spurious issue were hailed with rapture from foreign countries, and invited and welcomed with the most eager enthusiasm on their arrival. The German imitations of Schiller and Kotzebue, caricatured and distorted as they were by aberrations of a vulgar and vitiated taste, had still so much of the raciness and vigour of the old English drama, from which they were avowedly derived, that they instantly became more popular in England than any thing that her own artists had recently produced; and served still more effectually to recall our affections to their native and legitimate rulers. Then followed republications of Massinger, and Beaumont and Fletcher, and Ford, and their contemporaries—and a host of new tragedies, all written in avowed and elaborate imitation of the

* It is not a little remarkable to find such a man as Goldsmith joining in this pitiful sneer. In his Vicar of Wakefield, he constantly represents his famous town ladies, Miss Carolina Amelia Wilhelmina Skeggs, and the other, as discoursing about "high life, *Shakspeare*, and the musical glasses!"—and, in a more serious passage, he introduces a player as astonishing the Vicar, by informing him that "Dryden and Rowe's manner were quite out of fashion—our taste has gone back a whole century; Fletcher, Ben Jonson, and, above all, the *plays of Shakspeare*, are the only things that go down." "How!" says the Vicar, "is it possible that the present age can be pleased with *that antiquated dialect*, that *obsolete humour*, and those overcharged characters, which *abound in the works you mention?*" No writer of name, who was not aiming at a paradox, *would venture to say this now.*

ancient models. Miss Baillie, we rather think, had the merit of leading the way in this return to our old allegiance—and then came a volume of plays by Mr. Chenevix, and a succession of single plays, all of considerable merit, from Mr. Coleridge, Mr. Maturin, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Cornwall, and Mr. Milman. The first and the last of these names are the most likely to be remembered; but none of them, we fear, will ever be ranked with the older worthies; nor is it conceivable that any age should ever class them together.

We do not mean, however, altogether to deny, that there may be some illusion in our habitual feelings as to the merits of the great originals—consecrated, as they are, in our imaginations, by early admiration, and associated, as all their peculiarities, and the mere accidents and oddities of their diction, now are, with the recollection of their intrinsic excellences. It is owing to this, we suppose, that we can scarcely venture to ask ourselves steadily, and without an inward startling and feeling of alarm, what reception one of Shakspeare's irregular plays—The Tempest, for example, or the Midsummer Night's Dream—would be likely to meet with, if it were *now* to appear for the first time, without name, notice, or preparation? Nor can we pursue the hazardous supposition through all the possibilities to which it invites us, without something like a sense of impiety and profanation. Yet, though some little superstition may mingle with our faith, we must still believe it to be the true one. Though time may have hallowed many things that were at first but common, and accidental associations imparted a charm to much that was in itself indifferent, we cannot but believe that there was an original sanctity which time only matured and extended—and an inherent charm, from which the association derived all its power. And when we look candidly and calmly to the works of our early dramatists, it is impossible, we think, to dispute, that, after criticism has done its worst on them—after all deductions for impossible plots and fantastical characters, unaccountable forms of speech and occasional extravagance, indelicacy and horrors—there is a facility and richness about them, both of thought and of diction—a force of invention, and a depth of sagacity—an originality of conception, and a play of fancy—a nakedness and energy of passion, and, above all, a copiousness of imagery, and a sweetness and flexibility of verse, which is altogether unrivalled, in earlier or in later times,—and places them, in our estimation, in the very highest and foremost place among ancient or modern poets.

It is in these particulars that the inferiority of their recent imitators is most apparent—in the want of ease and variety—originality and grace. There is, in all their attempts, whatever may be their other merits or defects, an air of anxiety and labour—and indications, by far too visible, at once of timidity and ambition. This may arise, in part, from the fact of their being, too obviously and consciously, imitators. They do not aspire so much to rival the genius of their originals as to copy their manner. They do not write as *they* would have written in the present day, but as they imagine they themselves would have written two hundred years ago. They revive the antique phraseology, repeat the venerable oaths, and emulate the quaint familiarities of that classical period—and wonder that they are not mistaken for new incarnations of its departed poets! One great cause why they are not, is, that they speak an unnatural dialect, and are constrained by a masquerade habit; in neither of which it is *possible to display* that freedom, and those delicate traits of character, *which are the life* of the drama, and were among the chief merits of those

who once exalted it so highly. Another bad effect of imitation, and especially of the imitation of unequal and irregular models in a critical age, is, that nothing is thought fit to be copied but the exquisite and shining passages;—from which it results, in the *first* place, that all our rivalry is reserved for occasions in which its success is most hopeless; and, in the *second* place, that instances, even of occasional success, want their proper grace and effect, by being deprived of the relief, shading and preparation, which they would naturally have received in a less fastidious composition; and, instead of the warm and native and ever-varying graces of a spontaneous effusion, the work acquires the false and feeble brilliancy of a prize essay in a foreign tongue—a collection of splendid patches of different texture and pattern.

At the bottom of all this—and perhaps as its most efficient cause—there lurks, we suspect, an unreasonable and undue dread of criticism;—not the deliberate and indulgent criticism which we exercise rather for the encouragement of talent than its warning,—but the vigilant and paltry derision which is perpetually stirring in all idle societies, and but too continually present to the spirits of all who aspire to its notice. There is nothing so certain, we take it, as that those who are the most alert in discovering the faults of a work of genius are the least touched with its beauties. Those who admire and enjoy fine poetry, in short, are quite a different class of persons from those who find out its flaws and defects—who are sharp at detecting a plagiarism or a grammatical inaccuracy, and laudably industrious in bringing to light an obscure passage—sneering at an exaggerated one—or wondering at the meaning of some piece of excessive simplicity. It is in vain to expect the praises of such people, for they never praise; and it is truly very little worth while to disarm their censure. It is only the praises of the real lovers of poetry that ever give it fame or popularity—and these are little affected by the cavils of the fastidious. Yet the genius of most modern writers seems to be rebuked under that of those pragmatical and insignificant censors. They are so much afraid of faults, that they will scarcely venture upon beauties; and seem more anxious in general to be *safe*, than original. They dare not indulge in a florid and magnificent way of writing, for fear of being charged with bombast by the cold-blooded and malignant. They must not be tender, lest they should be laughed at for puling and whining; nor discursive and fanciful, like their great predecessors, under pain of being held out to derision as ingenious gentlemen who have dreamed that gods have made them poetical!

Thus, the dread of ridicule, which they have ever before their eyes, represses all the emotions, on the expression of which their success entirely depends: and, in order to escape the blame of those to whom they can give no pleasure, and through whom they can gain no fame, they throw away their best chance of pleasing those who are capable of relishing their excellences, and on whose admiration alone their reputation must at all events be founded. There is a great want of magnanimity, we think, as well as of wisdom, in this sensitiveness to blame; and we are convinced that no modern author will ever write with the grace and vigour of the older ones, who does not write with some portion of their fearlessness and indifference to censure. *Courage*, in short, is at least as necessary as genius to the success of a work of imagination; since, without this, it is impossible to attain that freedom and self-possession, *without which* no talents can ever have fair play, and, *far less, that inward confidence* and exaltation of spirit which must accom-

pany all the higher acts of the understanding. The earlier writers probably less occasion for courage to secure them these advantages; as public was far less critical in their day, and much more prone to admira than to derision; but we can still trace in their writings the indications l of a proud consciousness of their own powers and privileges, and of a bi contempt for the cavils to which they might expose themselves. In our times, we know but one writer who is emancipated from this slavish aw vulgar detraction—this petty timidity about being detected in blunders faults; and that is the illustrious author of Waverley and the other no that have made an era in our literature as remarkable, and as likely t remembered, as any which can yet be traced in its history. We shall now say how large a portion of his success we ascribe to this intrepid ten of his genius; but we are confident that no person can read any of his w derful works without feeling that their author was utterly careless of reproach of small imperfections, disdained the inglorious labour of perpe correctness, and has *consequently* imparted to his productions that spirit ease and variety, which reminds us of better times, and gives lustre effect to those rich and resplendent passages to which it left him fre aspire.

Lord Byron, in some respects, may appear not to have been wantir intrepidity. He has not certainly been very tractable to advice, nor patient of blame. But this, in him, we fear, is not superiority to cens but aversion to it; and, instead of proving that he is indifferent to detract shows only, that the dread and dislike of it operate with more than com force on his mind. A critic whose object was to give pain, would desir better proof of the efficacy of his inflictions than the bitter scorn and fi defiance with which they are encountered; and the more vehemently noble author protests that he despises the reproaches that have been beste on him, the more certain it is that he suffers from their severity, and w be glad to escape if he cannot overbear them. But however this may we think it is certain that his late dramatic efforts have not been r carelessly, or without anxiety. To us, at least, they seem very elabo and hardwrought compositions; and this indeed we take to be their lea characteristic, and the key to most of their peculiarities.

Considered as poems, we confess they appear to us to be rather he verbose, and inelegant—deficient in the passion and energy which bel to the other writings of the noble author—and still more in the richne imagery, the originality of thought, and the sweetness of versificatior which he used to be distinguished. They are for the most part sole prolix, and ostentatious—lengthened out by large preparations for catas phes that never arrive, and tantalising us with slight specimens and glin of a higher interest scattered thinly up and down many weary pages of p pous declamation. Along with the concentrated pathos and homest sentiments of his former poetry, the noble author seems also, we ca imagine why, to have discarded the spirited and melodious versificatio which they were embodied, and to have formed to himself a measure equ remote from the spring and vigour of his former compositions, and fror softness and flexibility of the ancient masters of the drama. There are sweet lines, and many of great weight and energy; but the general m of the verse is cumbrous and unmusical. His lines do not vibrate polished lances, at once strong and light, in the hands of his persons, are wielded like clumsy batons in a bloodless affray. Instead of the gra

arity and idiomatical melodies of Shakspeare, it is apt, too, to fall into
y prose, in its approaches to the easy and colloquial style; and in the
passages is occasionally deformed by low and common images, that
nise but ill with the general solemnity of the diction.

plays, we are afraid we must also say that the pieces before us are
g in interest, character and action;—at least we must say this of the
t of them—for *there is* interest in Sardanapalus, and beauties, besides,
ake us blind to its other defects. There is, however, throughout, a
f dramatic effect and variety; and we suspect there is something in
aracter or habit of Lord Byron's genius which will render this unat-
e. He has too little sympathy with the ordinary feelings and frailties
anity, to succeed well in their representation—"His soul is like a
d dwells apart." It does not "hold the mirror up to nature," nor
he hues of surrounding objects; but, like a kindled furnace, throws
intense glare and gloomy grandeur on the narrow scene which it
tes. He has given us, in his other works, some glorious pictures of
—some magnificent reflections, and some inimitable delineations of
:er: but the same feelings prevail in them all; and his portraits in
lar, though a little varied in the drapery and attitude, seem all copied
ne same original. His Childe Harold, his Giaour, Conrad, Lara,
d, Cain, and Lucifer,—are all one individual. There is the same
of voluptuousness on the surface—the same canker of misanthropy
core of all he touches. He cannot draw the changes of many-co-
life, nor transport himself into the condition of the infinitely diversi-
aracters by whom a stage should be peopled. The very intensity of
ings—the loftiness of his views—the pride of his nature or his genius,
ld him from this identification; so that, in personating the heroes of
ne, he does little but repeat himself. It would be better for him, we
if it were otherwise; we are sure it would be better for his readers. He
get more fame, and things of far more worth than fame, if he would
cend to a more extended and cordial sympathy with his fellow-crea-
and we should have more variety of fine poetry, and, all at events, bet-
gedies. We have no business to read him a homily on the sinfulness of
nd uncharity; but we have a right to say, that it argues a poorness of
to keep always to the same topics and persons; and that the world
eary at last of the most energetic pictures of misanthropes and madmen
aws and their mistresses!

an gifted as he is, when he aspires at dramatic fame, should emulate
atest of dramatists. Let Lord Byron, then, think of Shakspeare—
nsider what a noble range of character, what a freedom from man-
and egotism, there is in him! How much he seems to have studied
; how little to have thought about himself; how seldom to have re-
or glanced back at his own most successful inventions! Why indeed
he? Nature was still open before him, and inexhaustible; and the
ess and variety that still delight his readers must have had constant
ions for himself. Take his Hamlet, for instance. What a character
e!—how full of thought, and refinement, and fancy, and indivi-
! "How infinite in faculties! In form and motion how express and
ible! The beauty of the universe, the paragon of animals!" Yet
the play, and we meet with him no more—neither in the author's
works, nor any where else! A common author, who had hit upon
a character, would have dragged it in at every turn, and worn it to

very tatters. Sir John Falstaff, again, is a world of wit and hu himself; but except in the two parts of Henry IV., there would ha no trace of such a being, had not the author been "ordered to him" in the Merry Wives of Windsor. He is not the least like B or Mercutio, or Sir Toby Belch, or any of the other witty personag same author,—nor are they like each other. Othello is one of t striking and powerful inventions on the stage. But when the pla we hear no more of him! The poet's creation comes no more to l under a fictitious name, than the real man would have done. Lord in Shakspeare's place, would have peopled the world with black C What indications are there of Lear in any of his earlier plays? Wh of it in any that he wrote afterwards? None. It might have been by any other man, he is so little conscious of it. He never once r that huge sea of sorrow; but has left it standing by itself, shore unapproachable. Who else could have afforded not to have "dro stage with tears" from such a source? But we must break away fro speare, and come at last to the work before us.

In a very brief preface, Lord Byron renews his protest against upon any of his plays as having been composed "with the mos view to the stage;" and, at the same time, testifies in behalf of the as essential to the existence of the drama—according to what " lately, the law of literature throughout the world, and is still so in civilised parts of it." We do not think those opinions very consist we think that neither of them could possibly find favour with whose genius had a truly dramatic character: we should as soon orator to compose a speech altogether unfit to be spoken. A dra merely a dialogue, but *an action;* and necessarily supposes that s is to pass before the eyes of assembled spectators. Whatever is p its written part, should derive its peculiarity from this considerat style should be an accompaniment to action—and should be calc excite the emotions, and keep alive the attention, of gazing multit an author does not bear this continually in his mind, and does no the ideal presence of an eager and diversified assemblage, he may perhaps, but assuredly he never will be a dramatist. If Lord By does not wish to impregnate his elaborate scenes with the living sp drama—if he has no hankering after stage-effect,—if he is not hau the visible presentment of the persons he has created—if, in settir vehement invective, he does not fancy the tone in which Mr. Ke deliver it, and anticipate the long applauses of the pit, then he ma that neither his feelings nor his genius are in unison with the sta Why, then, should he affect the form without the power of trag may, indeed, produce a mystery, like Cain, or a far sweeter vi Manfred, without subjecting himself to the censure of legitimate but if, with a regular subject before him, capable of all the str graces of the drama, he does not feel himself able or willing to d its resources so as to affect an audience with terror and delight, he man we want—and his time and talents are wasted here. Didact ing and eloquent description will not compensate, in a play, for a dramatic spirit and invention: and, besides, sterling sense and such, ought to stand by themselves, without the unmeaning mor *dramatis personæ*.

As to Lord Byron's pretending to set up the *Unities* at this tin

s "the law of literature throughout the world," it is mere caprice and contradiction. He, if ever man was, is *a law to himself*—"a chartered libertine;"—and now, when he is tired of this unbridled licence, he wants to do penance within the *Unities!* This certainly looks very like affectation; or, if there is any thing sincere in it, the motive must be, that, by getting rid of so much story and action, in order to simplify the plot and bring it within the prescribed limits, he may fill up the blank spaces with long discussions, and have nearly all the talk to himself! For ourselves, we will confess that we have had a considerable contempt for these same *Unities*, ever since we read Dennis's Criticism on Cato in our boyhood—except, indeed, the unity of action, which Lord Byron does not appear to set much store by. Dr. Johnson, we conceive, has pretty well settled this question: and if Lord Byron chooses to grapple with him, he will find that it requires a stronger arm than that with which he puts down our Laureates. We shall only add, that when the moderns tie themselves down to write tragedies of the same length, and on the same simple plan in other respects, with those of Sophocles and Æschylus, we shall not object to their adhering to the *Unities;* for there can, in that case, be no sufficient inducement for violating them. But, in the mean time, we hold that English dramatic poetry soars above the *Unities*, just as the imagination does. The only pretence for insisting on them is, that we suppose the stage itself to be, actually and really, the very spot on which a given action is performed; and, if so, this space cannot be removed to another. But the supposition is manifestly quite contrary to truth and experience. The stage is considered merely as a place in which any given action *ad libitum* may be performed; and accordingly may be shifted, and is so in imagination, as often as the action requires it. That any writer should ever have insisted on such an unity as this, must appear sufficiently preposterous; but that the defence of it should be taken up by an author whose plays are never to be acted at all, and which, therefore, have nothing more than a nominal reference to any stage or locality whatever, must strike one as absolutely incredible.

It so happens, however, that the disadvantage, and in truth absurdity, of sacrificing higher objects to a formality of this kind, is strikingly displayed in one of these dramas—THE TWO FOSCARI. The whole interest here turns upon the younger of them having returned from banishment, in defiance of the law and its consequences, from an unconquerable longing after his own country. Now, the only way to have made this sentiment palpable, the practicable foundation of stupendous sufferings, would have been, to have presented him to the audience wearing out his heart in exile—and forming his resolution to return, at a distance from his country, or hovering, in excruciating suspense, within sight of its borders. We might then have caught some glimpse of the nature of his motives, and of so extraordinary a character. But as this would have been contrary to one of the unities, we first meet with him led from "the Question," and afterwards taken back to it in the Ducal Palace, or clinging to the dungeon-walls of his native city, and expiring from his dread of leaving them; and therefore feel more wonder than sympathy, when we are told, in a Jeremiad of wilful lamentations, that these agonising consequences have resulted, not from guilt or disaster, but merely from the intensity of his love for his country.

PARALLEL BETWEEN BYRON AND MOORE.*

It is curious to see two writers, so very able, and so very different, both treating the same singular and (as one might be tempted to suppose) almost intractable subject. All things, however, are possible to genius, and come within the range of poetry. We may set the reader's mind at once easy by stating, that there is nothing (or next to nothing) of that speculative daring in Lord Byron's present production that gave such just offence in his MYSTERY of CAIN; and that Mr. Moore, in his new poem, has kept his amatory vein within the strict bounds of decorum. There is nothing equivocal in it but the title; and that may occasion some idle flutter and some trifling disappointment. The first of these very extraordinary performances may be read without incurring a frown from the brow of piety, and the last without calling up a blush in the cheek of modesty. Considering the nature of the subject, and the temper of the authors, this is a great and a rare merit. Perhaps they found themselves so near the edge of a precipice, that they were afraid, if they made one false step, of being hurled down "ten thousand fathom deep." To whatever cause we may attribute this cautious reserve and self-denial, we have to thank them for saving us *a world of moralising* —a tone in criticism we do not much affect, unless when it is forced upon us, and which we would gladly leave to the pulpit, or to the chairs of moral philosophy.

Mr. Moore, in his *Preface*, informs us, that he had somewhat hastened his publication, to obviate the disadvantage of coming after his friend Lord Byron; or, as he ingeniously expresses it, "By an earlier appearance in the literary horizon, to give himself the chance of what astronomers call an *heliacal rising*, before the luminary, in whose light he was to be lost, should appear." This is an amiable, but by no means a reasonable modesty. The light that plays round Mr. Moore's verses, tender, glancing, and brilliant, is in no danger of being extinguished even in the sullen glare of Lord Byron's genius. An aurora borealis might as well think of being put out by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius. They are both bright stars in the firmament of modern poetry, but as distant and unlike as Saturn and Mercury. Their rising may be at the same time, but they can never move in the same orb, nor meet or jostle in "the wide pathless way" of fancy and invention. Let Mr. Moore then shine on, and fear no envious eclipse, unless it be from an excess of his own light!

We conceive, though these two celebrated writers in some measure divide the poetical public between them, that it is not the same public whose favour they severally enjoy in the highest degree. They are both read and admired, no doubt, in the same extended circle of taste and fashion; but each is the favourite of a totally different set of readers. Thus a lover may pay the same outward attention to two different women; but he only means to flirt with the one, while the other is the mistress of his heart. The gay, the fair, the witty, the happy, idolise Mr. Moore's delightful Muse, on her pedestal of airy smiles or transient tears. Lord Byron's severer verse is enshrined in the breasts of those whose gaiety has been turned to gall, whose fair exterior has a canker within, whose mirth has received a rebuke as if it were folly, from whom happiness has fled like a dream! If we compute

* Loves of the Angels: by T. Moore. Heaven and Earth: by Lord Byron.—Vol. xxxviii. p. 27. *February, 1823.*

the odds upon the known chances of human life, his Lordship will bid fair to have as numerous a class of votaries as his more agreeable rival! We are not going to give a preference, but we beg leave to make a distinction on the present occasion. The poetry of Moore is essentially that of *Fancy*; the poetry of Byron that of *Passion*. If there is passion in the effusions of the one, the fancy by which it is expressed predominates over it: if fancy is called to the aid of the other, it is still subservient to the passion. Lord Byron's jests are downright earnest; Mr. Moore, when he is most serious, seems half in jest. The latter plays and trifles with his subject, caresses and grows enamoured of it: the former grasps it eagerly to his bosom, breathes death upon it, and turns from it with loathing or dismay! The fine aroma that is exhaled from the flowers of poesy every where lends its perfume to the verse of the Bard of Erin. The noble bard (less fortunate in his Muse) tries to extract poison from them. If Lord Byron flings his own views or feelings upon outward objects (jaundicing the sun), Mr. Moore seems to exist in the delights, the virgin fancies, of nature. He is free of the Rosicrucian society; and enjoys an ethereal existence among troops of sylphs and spirits, and in a perpetual vision of wings, flowers, rainbows, smiles, blushes, tears, and kisses. Every page of his works is a vignette, every line that he writes glows or sparkles; and it would seem (so some one said who knew him well and loved him much) "as if his airy spirit, drawn from the sun, continually fluttered with fond aspirations to regain that native source of light and heat." The worst is, our author's mind is too vivid, too active, to suffer a moment's repose. We are cloyed with sweetness, and dazzled with splendour. Every image must "blush celestial rosy red, love's proper hue,"—every syllable must breathe a sigh. A sentiment is lost in a simile—the simile is overloaded with an epithet. It is "like morn risen on mid-noon." No eventful story, no powerful contrast, no *moral*, none of the sordid details of human life (all is ethereal), none of its sharp calamities, or, if they inevitably occur, his Muse throws a soft glittering veil over them,

> "Like moonlight on a troubled sea,
> Brightening the storm it cannot calm."

We do not believe Mr. Moore ever writes a line, that in itself would not pass for poetry, that is not at least a vivid or harmonious commonplace. Lord Byron writes whole pages of sullen, crabbed prose, like a long dreary road that, however, leads to doleful shades or palaces of the blest. In short, Mr. Moore's Parnassus is a blooming Eden; Lord Byron's is a rugged wilderness of shame and sorrow. On the tree of knowledge of the first, you can see nothing but perpetual flowers and verdure: in the last, you see the naked stem and rough bark; but it heaves at intervals with inarticulate throes, and you hear the shrieks of a human voice within.

Critically speaking, Mr. Moore's poetry is chargeable with two peculiarities. First, the pleasure or interest he conveys to us is almost always derived from the first impressions or physical properties of objects, not from their connection with passion or circumstances. His light dazzles the eye, his perfumes soothe the smell, his sounds ravish the ear: but then they do so for and from themselves, and at all times and places equally—for the heart has nothing to do with it. Hence we observe a kind of fastidious extravagance in Mr. Moore's serious poetry. Each thing must be fine, soft, exquisite in itself, for it is never set off by reflection or contrast. It glitters

to the sense through an atmosphere of indifference. Our indolent, luxuri bard does not whet the appetite by setting us to hunt after the game human passion; and is therefore obliged to pamper us with dainties, seaso with rich fancy, and the *sauce piquante* of poetic diction. Poetry, in hands, becomes a kind of *cosmetic* art—it is the poetry of the toilette. Muse must be as fine as the Lady of Loretto. The naked Venus, to so eyes, would seem a dowdy to her! Now, this principle of composition le not only to a defect of dramatic interest, but also of imagination. For ev thing in this world, the meanest incident or object, may receive a light importance from its association with other objects and with the hear man; and the variety thus created is endless as it is striking and profou But if we begin and end in those objects that are beautiful or dazzling themselves and at first blush, we shall soon be confined to a narrow roun self-pleasing topics, and be both superficial and wearisome. It is the f of Mr. Wordsworth's poetry, that he has perversely relied too much (or who on this reaction of the imagination on subjects that are petty and repulsiv themselves; and of Mr. Moore's, that he appeals too exclusively to the flatt ing support of sense and fancy. Secondly, we have remarked that Mr. Mo hardly ever describes entire objects, but abstract qualities of objects. It is n picture that he gives us, but an inventory of beauty. He takes a blush, smile, and runs on whole stanzas in ecstatic praise of it, and then diverges to sound of a voice, and "discourses eloquent music" on the subject: but it mi as well be the light of Heaven that he is describing, or the voice of Ech we have no human figure before us, no palpable reality answering to substantive form in nature. Hence we think it may be explained wh is, that this author has so little picturesque effect—with such vividnes conception, such insatiable ambition after ornament, and such an in haustible and delightful play of fancy. Mr. Moore is a colourist in poet a musician also; and has a heart full of tenderness and susceptibility for that is delightful and amiable in itself, and that does not require the or of suffering, of crime, or of deep thought, to stamp it with a bold charac In this, we conceive, consists the charm of his poetry, which all the wo feel, but which it is so difficult for critics to explain scientifically, and conformity to *transcendental rules*. It has the charm of the softest most brilliant execution. There is no wrinkle, no deformity, on its smo and shining surface. It has the charm which arises from the continual de to please, and from the spontaneous sense of pleasure in the author's mi Without being gross in the smallest degree, it is voluptuous in the high It is a sort of sylph-like, spiritualised sensuality. So far from being licenti in the present instance, Mr. Moore has become moral and sentimental (deed he was always the last), and tantalises his young and fair readers w the glittering shadows and mystic adumbrations of evanescent delights. (in fine), in his courtship of the Muses, resembles those lovers who alw say the softest things on all occasions; who smile with irresistible g humour at their own success; who banish pain and truth from th thoughts, and who impart the delight they feel in themselves unconsciou to others! Mr. Moore's poetry is the thornless rose—its touch is vel its hue vermilion, and its graceful form is cast in beauty's mould. L Byron's is a prickly bramble, or sometimes a deadly Upas, of form uncou and uninviting, that has its root in the clefts of the rock, and its head mo *ing the skies*, round which the loud cataracts roar, and that wars with t *thunder cloud* and tempest.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.*

Mr. Scott, though living in an age usually prolific of original poetry, has manifestly outstripped all his competitors in the race of popularity; and stands already upon a height to which no other writer has attained in the memory of any one now alive. We doubt, indeed, whether any English poet *ever* had so many of his books sold, or so many of his verses read and admired by such a multitude of persons in so short a time. We are credibly informed that nearly thirty thousand copies of "The Lay" have been already disposed of in this country; and that the demand for Marmion, and the poem now before us, has been still more considerable,—a circulation, we believe, altogether without example, in the case of a bulky work, not addressed to the bigotry of the mere mob, either religious or political.

A popularity so universal is a pretty sure proof of extraordinary merit,—a far surer one, we readily admit, than would be afforded by any praises of ours; and therefore, though we pretend to be privileged, in ordinary cases, to foretel the ultimate reception of all claims on public admiration, our function may be thought to cease, where the event is already so certain and conspicuous. As it is a sore thing, however, to be deprived of our privileges on so important an occasion, we hope to be pardoned for insinuating, that, even in such a case, the office of the critic may not be altogether superfluous. Though the success of the author be decisive, and likely to be permanent, it still may not be without its use to point out, in consequence of what, and in spite of what, he has succeeded; nor altogether uninstructive to trace the precise limits of the connection which, even in this dull world, indisputably subsists between success and desert, and to ascertain how far unexampled popularity implies unrivalled talent.

As it is the object of poetry to give pleasure, it seems to be a pretty safe conclusion, that that poetry must be the best which gives the greatest pleasure to the greatest number of persons. Yet we must pause a little before we give our assent to so plausible a proposition. It would not be quite correct, we fear, to say that those are invariably the best judges who are most easily pleased. The great multitude, even of the reading world, must necessarily be uninstructed and injudicious; and will frequently be found, not only to derive pleasure from what is worthless in finer eyes, but to be quite insensible to those beauties which afford the most exquisite delight to more cultivated understandings. True pathos and sublimity will indeed charm every one: but, out of this lofty sphere, we are pretty well convinced, that the poetry which appears most perfect to a very refined taste will not turn out to be very popular poetry.

This indeed, is saying nothing more than that the ordinary readers of poetry have not a very refined taste; and that they are often insensible to many of its highest beauties, while they still more frequently mistake its imperfections for excellence. The fact, when stated in this simple way, commonly excites neither opposition nor surprise: and yet, if it be asked why the taste of a few individuals, who do not perceive beauty where many others perceive it, should be exclusively dignified with the name of good taste; or why poetry which gives pleasure to a very great number of readers, should be thought inferior to that which pleases a much smaller

* *The Lady of the Lake.*—Vol. xvi. p. 263. August, 1810.

number;—the answer, perhaps, may not be quite so ready as might have been expected from the alacrity of our assent to the first proposition. That there is a good answer to be given, however, we entertain no doubt: and if that which we are about to offer should not appear very clear or satisfactory, we must submit to have it thought that the fault is not altogether in the subject.

In the first place, then, it should be remembered, that though the taste of very good judges is necessarily the taste of a few, it is implied, in their description, that they are persons eminently qualified, by natural sensibility, and long experience and reflection, to perceive all beauties that really exist, as well as to settle the relative value and importance of all the different sorts of beauty;—they are in that very state, in short, to which all who are in any degree capable of tasting those refined pleasures would certainly arrive, if their sensibility were increased, and their experience and reflection enlarged. It is difficult, therefore, in following out the ordinary analogies of language, to avoid considering them as in the right, and calling their taste the true and the just one, when it appears that it is such as is uniformly produced by the cultivation of those faculties upon which all our perceptions of taste so obviously depend. It is to be considered also, that though it be the end of poetry to please, one of the parties whose pleasure, and whose notions of excellence, will always be primarily consulted in its composition is the poet himself; and as he must necessarily be more cultivated than the great body of his readers, the presumption is, that he will always belong, comparatively speaking, to the class of good judges, and endeavour, consequently, to produce that sort of excellence which is likely to meet with *their* approbation. When authors, and those of whose suffrages authors are ambitious, thus conspire to fix upon the same standard of what is good in taste of composition, it is easy to see how it should come to bear this name in society, in preference to what might afford more pleasure to individuals of less influence. Besides all this, it is obvious that it must be infinitely more *difficult* to produce any thing conformable to this exalted standard, than merely to fall in with the current of popular taste. To attain the former object it is necessary, for the most part, to understand thoroughly all the feelings and associations that are modified or created by cultivation;—to accomplish the latter, it will often be sufficient merely to have observed the course of familar preferences. Success, however, is rare in proportion as it is difficult; and it is needless to say what a vast addition rarity makes to value, or how exactly our admiration at success is proportioned to our sense of the difficulty of the undertaking.

Such seem to be the most general and immediate causes of the apparent paradox, of reckoning that which pleases the greatest number as inferior to that which pleases the few; and such the leading grounds for fixing the standard of excellence, in a question of mere feeling and gratification, by a different rule than that of the quantity of gratification produced. With regard to some of the fine arts—for the distinction between popular and actual merit obtains in them all—there are no other reasons, perhaps, to be assigned; and, in music for example, when we have said that it is the *authority* of those who are best qualified by nature and study, and the *difficulty* and *rarity* of the attainment, that entitles certain exquisite *performances* to rank higher than others that give far more general delight, *we have probably* said all that can be said in explanation of this mode of *speaking and judging*. In poetry, however, and in some of her departments,

his familiar, though somewhat extraordinary rule of estimation, is justified by other considerations.

As it is the cultivation of natural and perhaps universal capacities that produces that refined taste which takes away our pleasure in vulgar excellence, so it is to be considered, that there is an universal tendency to the propagation of such a state; and that, in times tolerably favourable to human happiness, there is a continual progress of improvement in this, as in the other faculties of nations and large assemblages of men. The number of intelligent judges may, therefore, be regarded as perpetually on the increase.

The inner circle, to which the poet delights chiefly to pitch his voice, is perpetually enlarging; and, looking to that great futurity to which his ambition is constantly directed, it may be found that the most refined style of composition to which he can attain, will be, at the last, the most extensively and permanently popular. This holds true, we think, with regard to all the productions of art that are open to the inspection of any considerable part of the community; but, with regard to poetry in particular, there is one circumstance to be attended to that renders this conclusion peculiarly safe, and goes far indeed to reconcile the taste of the multitude with that of more cultivated judges.

As it seems difficult to conceive that mere cultivation should either absolutely create or utterly destroy any natural capacity of enjoyment, it is not easy to suppose, that the qualities which delight the uninstructed should be substantially different from those which give pleasure to the enlightened. They may be arranged according to a different scale,— and certain shades and accompaniments may be more or less indispensable; but the qualities in a poem that give most pleasure to the refined and fastidious critic, are in substance, we believe, the very same that delight the most injudicious of its admirers:—and the very wide difference which exists between their usual estimates may be in a great degree accounted for, by considering that the one judges absolutely, and the other relatively—that the one attends only to the intrinsic qualities of the *work*, while the other refers more immediately to the merit of the *author*. The most popular passages in popular poetry are, in fact, for the most part, very beautiful and striking; yet they are very often such passages as could never be ventured on by any writer who aimed at the praise of the judicious; and this for the obvious reason, that they are trite and hackneyed,—that they have been repeated till they have lost all grace and propriety,—and, instead of exalting the imagination with the impression of original genius or creative fancy, they only nauseate and offend by the association of paltry plagiarism and impudent inanity. It is only, however, on those who have read and remembered the original passages, and their better imitations, that this effect is produced. To the ignorant and the careless, the twentieth imitation has all the charm of an original; and that which oppresses the more experienced reader with weariness and disgust, rouses them with all the force and vivacity of novelty. It is not, then, because the ornaments of popular poetry are deficient in intrinsic worth and beauty that they are slighted by the critical reader, but because he at once recognises them to be stolen, and perceives that they are arranged without taste or congruity. In his indignation at the dishonesty, and his contempt for the poverty of the collector, he overlooks altogether the value of what he has collected, or remembers it only as an aggravation *of his offence,—as converting* larceny into sacrilege, and adding *the guilt of profanation to the folly* of unsuitable finery. There are other

features, no doubt, that distinguish the idols of vulgar admiration from the beautiful exemplars of pure taste; but this is so much the most characteristic and remarkable, that we know no way in which we could so shortly describe the poetry that pleases the multitude, and displeases the select few, as by saying that it consisted of all the most known and most brilliant parts of the most celebrated authors—of a splendid and unmeaning accumulation of those images and phrases which had long charmed every reader in the works of their original inventors.

The justice of these remarks will probably be at once admitted by all who have attended to the history and effects of what may be called *poetical diction* in general, or even of such particular phrases and epithets as have been indebted to their beauty for too great a notoriety. Our associations with all this class of expressions, which have become trite only in consequence of their intrinsic excellence, now suggest to us no ideas but those of schoolboy imbecility and childish affectation. We look upon them merely as the common, hired, and tawdry trappings of all who wish to put on, for the hour, the masquerade habit of poetry; and, instead of receiving from them any kind of delight or emotion, do not even distinguish or attend to the signification of the words of which they consist. The ear is so palled with their repetition, and so accustomed to meet with them as the habitual expletives of the lowest class of versifiers, that they come at last to pass over it without exciting any sort of conception whatever, and are not even so much attended to as to expose their most gross incoherence or inconsistency to detection. It is of this quality that Swift has availed himself in so remarkable a manner, in his famous "Song by a person of quality," which consists entirely in a selection of some of the most trite and well-sounding phrases and epithets in the poetical lexicon, strung together without any kind of meaning or consistency, and yet so disposed, as to have been perused, perhaps by one half of their readers, without any suspicion of the deception. Most of those phrases, however, which had thus become sickening, and almost insignificant, to the intelligent readers of poetry in the days of Queen Anne, are in themselves beautiful and expressive, and, no doubt, retain much of their native grace in those ears that have not been alienated by their repetition.

But it is not merely from the use of much excellent diction, that a modern poet is thus debarred by the lavishness of his predecessors. There is a certain range of subjects and characters, and a certain manner and tone, which were probably, in their origin, as graceful and attractive, which have been proscribed by the same dread of imitation. It would be too long to enter, in this place, into any detailed examination of the peculiarities — originating chiefly in this source — which distinguish ancient from modern poetry. It may be enough just to remark, that, as the elements of poetical emotion are necessarily limited, so it was natural for those who first sought to excite it to avail themselves of those subjects, situations, and images that were most obviously calculated to produce that effect, and to assist them by the use of all those aggravating circumstances that most readily occurred as likely to heighten their operation. In this way, they got possession of all the choice materials of their art; and working without fear of comparisons, fell naturally into a free and graceful style of execution, at the same time that the profusion of their resources made them *somewhat* careless and inexpert in their application. After poets were in *a very different* situation. They could neither take the most natural and

general topics of interest, nor treat them with the ease and indifference of those who had the whole store at their command—because this was precisely what had been already done by those who had gone before them; and they were therefore put upon various expedients for attaining their object, and yet preserving their claim to originality. Some of them set themselves to observe and delineate both characters and external objects with greater minuteness and fidelity,—and others to analyse more carefully the mingling passions of the heart, and to feed and cherish a more limited train of emotion through a longer and more artful career,—while a third sort distorted both nature and passion according to some fantastical theory of their own, or took such a narrow corner of each, and dissected it with such curious and microscopic accuracy, that its original form was no longer discernible by the eyes of the uninstructed. In this way we think that modern poetry has both been enriched with more exquisite pictures, and deeper and more sustained strains of pathetic, than were known to the less elaborate artists of antiquity; at the same time that it has been defaced with more affectation, and loaded with far more intricacy. But whether they failed or succeeded,—and whether they distinguished themselves from their predecessors by faults or by excellences,—the later poets, we conceive, must be admitted to have almost always written in a more constrained and narrow manner than their originals, and to have departed farther from what was obvious, easy, and natural. Modern poetry, in this respect, may be compared perhaps, without any great impropriety, to modern sculpture. It is greatly inferior to the ancient in freedom, grace, and simplicity; but, in return, possesses a more decided expression, and more fine finishing of less suitable embellishments.

Whatever may be gained or lost, however, by this change of manner, it is obvious that poetry must become less popular by means of it. The most natural and obvious manner is always the most taking; and whatever costs the author much pains and labour, is usually found to require a corresponding effort on the part of the reader, which all readers are not disposed to make. That they who seek to be original by means of affectation should revolt more by their affectation than they attract by their originality, is just and natural; but even the nobler devices that win the suffrages of the judicious by their intrinsic beauty, as well as their novelty, are extremely apt to repel the multitude, and to obstruct the popularity of some of the most exquisite productions of genius. The beautiful but minute delineations of such admirable observers as Crabbe or Cowper are apt to appear tedious to those who take no interest in their subjects, and no concern about their art; and the refined, deep, and sustained pathetic of Campbell is still more apt to be mistaken for monotony and languor, by those who are either devoid of sensibility, or impatient of quiet reflection. The most popular style undoubtedly is that which has great variety and brilliancy, rather than exquisite finish in its images and descriptions; and which touches lightly on many passions, without raising any so high as to transcend the comprehension of ordinary mortals, or dwelling on it so long as to exhaust their patience.

Whether Mr. Scott holds the same opinion with us upon these matters, and has intentionally conformed his practice to this theory, or whether the peculiarities in his compositions have been produced merely by following out the natural bent of his genius, we do not presume to determine: but, that he has actually made use of all our recipes for popularity, we think

very evident; and conceive, that few things are more curious than the singular skill, or good fortune, with which he has reconciled his claims on the favour of the multitude with his pretensions to more select admiration. Confident in the force and originality of his own genius, he has not been afraid to avail himself of commonplaces both of diction and of sentiment, whenever they appeared to be beautiful or impressive,—using them however, at all times, with the skill and spirit of an inventor: and, quite certain that he could not be mistaken for a plagiarist or imitator, he has made free use of that great treasury of characters, images, and expressions, which had been accumulated by the most celebrated of his predecessors;—at the same time that the rapidity of his transitions, the novelty of his combinations, and the spirit and variety of his own thoughts and inventions, show plainly that he was a borrower from any thing but poverty, and took only what he could have given if he had been born in an earlier generation. The great secret of his popularity, however, and the leading characteristic of his poetry, appear to us to consist evidently in this,—that he has made more use of common topics, images, and expressions, than any original poet of later times; and, at the same time, displayed more genius and originality than any recent author who has worked in the same materials. By the latter peculiarity, he has entitled himself to the admiration of every description of readers;—by the former, he is recommended in an especial manner to the inexperienced, at the hazard of some little offence to the more cultivated and fastidious.

In the choice of his subjects, for example, he does not attempt to interest merely by fine observation or pathetic sentiment, but takes the assistance of a story, and enlists the reader's curiosity among his motives for attention. Then his characters are all selected from the most common *dramatis personæ* of poetry,—kings, warriors, knights, outlaws, nuns, minstrels, secluded damsels, wizards, and true lovers. He never ventures to carry us into the cottage of the peasant, like Crabbe or Cowper; nor into the bosom of domestic privacy, like Campbell; nor among creatures of the imagination, like Southey or Darwin. Such personages, we readily admit, are not in themselves so interesting or striking as those to whom Mr. Scott has devoted himself; but they are far less familiar in poetry—and are therefore more likely, perhaps, to engage the attention of those to whom poetry is familiar. In the management of the passions, again, Mr. Scott appears to us to have pursued the same popular and, comparatively, easy course. He has raised all the most familiar and poetical emotions, by the most obvious aggravations, and in the most compendious and judicious way. He has dazzled the reader with the splendour, and even warmed him with the transient heat of various affections; but he has nowhere fairly kindled him with enthusiasm, or melted him into tenderness. Writing for the world at large, he has wisely abstained from attempting to raise any passion to a height to which worldly people could not be transported; and contented himself with giving his reader the chance of feeling as a brave, kind, and affectionate gentleman should often feel in the ordinary course of his existence, without trying to breathe into him either that lofty enthusiasm which disdains the ordinary business and amusements of life, or that quiet and deep sensibility which unfits for all its pursuits. With regard to diction and imagery, too, it is quite obvious that Mr. Scott has not aimed at writing either in a pure or a very consistent style. He seems to have been anxious only to strike, and to be easily and universally understood; and, for this purpose, to have

illed the most glittering and conspicuous expressions of the most popular uthors, and to have interwoven them in splendid confusion with his own ervous diction and irregular versification. Indifferent whether he coins or orrows, and drawing with equal freedom on his memory and his imagination, e goes boldly forward, in full reliance on a never-failing abundance; and azzles with his richness and variety even those who are most apt to be ffended with his glare and irregularity. There is nothing in Mr. Scott of e severe and majestic style of Milton—or of the terse and fine composition f Pope—or of the elaborate elegance and melody of Campbell—or even of e flowing and redundant diction of Southey; but there is a medley of right images and glowing words, set carelessly and loosely together,—a iction, tinged successively with the careless richness of Shakspeare, the arshness and antique simplicity of the old romances, the homeliness of vulgar allads and anecdotes, and the sentimental glitter of the most modern poetry, —passing from the borders of the ludicrous to those of the sublime—alernately minute and energetic—sometimes artificial, and frequently negli-ent,—but always full of spirit and vivacity—abounding in images, that are triking, at first sight, to minds of every contexture—and never expressing sentiment which it can cost the most ordinary reader an exertion to comprehend.

Such seem to be the leading qualities that have contributed to Mr. Scott's opularity; and, as some of them are obviously of a kind to diminish his erit in the eyes of more fastidious judges, it is but fair to complete this view of his peculiarities by a hasty notice of such of them as entitle him to unqualified admiration;—and here it is impossible not to be struck with hat vivifying spirit of strength and animation which pervades all the inequalities of his composition, and keeps constantly on the mind of the reader he impression of great power, spirit, and intrepidity. There is nothing old, creeping, or feeble in all Mr. Scott's poetry;—no laborious littleness, or puling classical affectation. He has his failures, indeed, like other people; but he always attempts vigorously, and never fails in his immediate object, without accomplishing something far beyond the reach of an ordinary writer. Even when he wanders from the paths of pure taste, he leaves behind him the footsteps of a powerful genius; and moulds the most humble of his materials into a form worthy of a nobler substance. Allied to this inherent vigour and animation, and in a great degree derived from it, is that ir of facility and freedom which adds so peculiar a grace to most of Mr. cott's compositions. There is certainly no living poet whose works seem o come from him with so much ease, or who so seldom appears to labour, ven in the most burdensome parts of his performance. He seems, indeed, ever to think either of himself or his reader, but to be completely identified nd lost in the personage with whom he is occupied; and the attention of e reader is, consequently, either transferred unbroken to their adventures, or, if it glance back for a moment to the author, it is only to think ow much more might be done, by putting forth that strength at full, which as, without effort, accomplished so many wonders. It is owing partly to ese qualities, and partly to the great variety of his style, that Mr. Scott much less frequently tedious than any other bulky poet with whom we re acquainted. His store of images is so copious, that he never dwells upon ne long enough to produce weariness in the reader; and, even where he eals in borrowed or in tawdry wares, the rapidity of his transitions, and e transient glance with which he is satisfied as to each, leave the critic

no time to be offended, and hurry him forward along with the multitude, enchanted with the brilliancy of the exhibition. Thus, the very frequency of his deviations from pure taste comes, in some sort, to constitute their apology; and the profusion and variety of his faults to afford a new proof of his genius.

These, we think, are the general characteristics of Mr. Scott's poetry. Among his minor peculiarities, we might notice his singular talent for description, and especially for the description of scenes abounding in *motion* or *action* of any kind. In this department, indeed, we conceive him to be almost without a rival, either among modern or ancient poets; and the character and process of his descriptions are as extraordinary as their effect is astonishing. He places before the eyes of his readers a more distinct and complete picture, perhaps, than any other artist ever presented by mere words; and yet he does not enumerate all the visible parts of the subject with any degree of minuteness, nor confine himself by any means to what is visible. The singular merit of his delineations, on the contrary, consists in this, that, with a few bold and abrupt strokes, he finishes a most spirited outline,—and then instantly kindles it by the sudden light and colour of some moral affection. There are none of his fine descriptions, accordingly, which do not derive a great part of their clearness and picturesque effect, as well as their interest, from the quantity of character and moral expression which is thus blended with their details, and which, so far from interrupting the conception of the external object, very powerfully stimulate the fancy of the reader to complete it; and give a grace and a spirit to the whole representation, of which we do not know where to look for any other example.

Another very striking peculiarity in Mr. Scott's poetry is the air of freedom and nature which he has contrived to impart to most of his distinguished characters; and with which no poet more modern than Shakspeare has ventured to represent personages of such dignity. We do not allude here merely to the genuine familiarity and homeliness of many of his scenes and dialogues, but to the air of gaiety and playfulness in which persons of high rank seem, from time immemorial, to have thought it necessary to array, not their courtesy only, but their generosity and their hostility. This tone of good society Mr. Scott has shed over his higher characters with great grace and effect; and has, in this way, not only made his representations much more faithful and true to nature, but has very agreeably relieved the monotony of that tragic solemnity which ordinary writers appear to think indispensable to the dignity of poetical heroes and heroines. We are not sure, however, whether he has not occasionally exceeded a little in the use of this ornament; and given, now and then, too coquettish and trifling a tone to discussions of great interest. *

* Reviews of Scott's Poems and Miscellaneous Works will be found in Vol. i. p. 395. Vol. iv. p. 427. Vol. vi. p. 1. Vol. xii p. 1. Vol. xvi. p. 447. Vol. xviii. p. 379. Vol. xxiv. p. 273 Vol. xxvii. p. 1.

WORDSWORTH.*

This author is known to belong to a certain brotherhood of poets, who have haunted for some years about the Lakes of Cumberland; and is generally looked upon, we believe, as the purest model of the excellences and peculiarities of the school which they have been labouring to establish. Of the general merits of that school we have had occasion to express our opinion pretty fully in more places than one, and even to make some allusion to the former publications of the writer now before us. We are glad, however, to have found an opportunity of attending somewhat more particularly to his pretensions.

The Lyrical Ballads were unquestionably popular, and, we have no hesitation in saying, deservedly popular; for, in spite of their occasional vulgarity, affectation, and silliness, they were undoubtedly characterised by a strong spirit of originality, of pathos, and natural feeling; and recommended to all good minds by the clear impression which they bore of the amiable dispositions and virtuous principles of the author. By the help of these qualities, they were enabled, not only to recommend themselves to the indulgence of many judicious readers, but even to beget, among a pretty numerous class of persons, a sort of admiration of the very defects by which they were attended. It was upon this account chiefly that we thought it necessary to set ourselves against this alarming innovation. Childishness, conceit, and affectation are not of themselves very popular or attractive; and though mere novelty has sometimes been found sufficient to give them a temporary currency, we should have had no fear of their prevailing to any dangerous extent, if they had been graced with no more seductive accompaniments. It was precisely because the perverseness and bad taste of this new school was combined with a great deal of genius and of laudable feeling, that we were afraid of their spreading and gaining ground among us; and that we entered into the discussion with a degree of zeal and animosity which some might think unreasonable towards authors, to whom so much merit had been conceded. There were times and moods, indeed, in which we were led to suspect ourselves of unjustifiable severity, and to doubt, whether a sense of public duty had not carried us rather too far in reprobation of errors that seemed to be atoned for by excellences of no vulgar description. At other times, the magnitude of these errors—the disgusting absurdities into which they led their feebler admirers, and the derision and contempt which they drew from the more fastidious, even upon the merits with which they were associated,—made us wonder more than ever at the perversity by which they were retained, and regret that we had not declared ourselves against them with still more formidable and decided hostility.

In this temper of mind, we read the *annonce* of Mr. Wordsworth's publication with a good deal of interest and expectation, and opened his volumes with greater anxiety than he or his admirers will probably give us credit for. We have been greatly disappointed certainly as to the quality of the poetry; but we doubt whether the publication has afforded so much satisfaction to any other of his readers;—it has freed us from all doubt or hesitation as to the justice of our former censures, and has brought the

* Poems by William Wordsworth.—Vol. xi. p. 214. October, 1807.

matter to a test, which we cannot help hoping may be convincing to the author himself.

Mr. Wordsworth, we think, has now brought the question, as to the merit of his new school of poetry, to a very fair and decisive issue. The volumes before us are much more strongly marked by all its peculiarities than any former publication of the fraternity. In our apprehension, they are, on this very account, infinitely less interesting or meritorious; but it belongs to the public, and not to us, to decide upon their merit; and we will confess, that so strong is our conviction of their obvious inferiority, and the grounds of it, that we are willing for once to wave our right of appealing to posterity, and to take the judgment of the present generation of readers, and even of Mr. Wordsworth's former admirers, as conclusive on this occasion. If these volumes, which have all the benefit of the author's former popularity, turn out to be nearly as popular as the Lyrical Ballads —if they sell nearly to the same extent—or are quoted and imitated among half as many individuals,—we shall admit that Mr. Wordsworth has come much nearer the truth in his judgment of what constitutes the charm of poetry than we had previously imagined, and shall institute a more serious and respectful enquiry into his principles of composition than we have yet thought necessary. On the other hand,—if this little work, selected from the compositions of five maturer years, and written avowedly for the purpose of exalting a system which has already excited a good deal of attention, should be generally rejected by those whose prepossessions were in its favour, there is room to hope, not only that the system itself will meet with no more encouragement, but even that the author will be persuaded to abandon a plan of writing which defrauds his talents and industry of their natural reward.

Putting ourselves thus upon our country, we certainly look for a verdict against this publication; and have little doubt indeed of the result, upon a fair consideration of the evidence contained in these volumes. To accelerate that result, and to give a general view of the evidence to those into whose hands the record may not have already fallen, we must now make a few observations and extracts.

We shall not resume any of the particular discussions by which we formerly attempted to ascertain the value of the improvements which this new school has effected in poetry;* but shall lay the grounds of our opposition, for this time, a little more broadly. The end of poetry, we take it, is to please—and the name, we think, is strictly applicable to every metrical composition from which we receive pleasure, without any laborious exercise of the understanding. This pleasure may, in general, be analysed into three parts; that which we receive from the excitement of Passion or Emotion—that which is derived from the play of Imagination, or the easy exercise of Reason—and that which depends on the character and qualities of the Diction. The two first are the vital and primary springs of poetical delight, and can scarcely require explanation to any one. The last has been alternately overrated and undervalued by the professors of the poetical art; and is in such low estimation with the author now before us, and his associates, that it is necessary to say a few words in explanation of it.

One great beauty of diction exists only for those who have some degree of scholarship or critical skill. This is what depends on the exquisite

* See Vol. i. p. 63, &c.; Vol. vii. p. 1, &c.

propriety of the words employed, and the delicacy with which they are adapted to the meaning which is to be expressed. Many of the finest passages in Virgil and Pope derive their principal charm from the fine propriety of their diction. Another source of beauty, which extends only to the more instructed class of readers, is that which consists in the judicious or happy application of expressions which have been sanctified by the use of famous writers, or which bear the stamp of a simple or venerable antiquity. There are other beauties of diction, however, which are perceptible by all—the beauties of sweet sound and pleasant associations. The melody of words and verses is indifferent to no reader of poetry; but the chief recommendation of poetical language is certainly derived from those general associations, which give it a character of dignity or elegance, sublimity or tenderness. Every one knows that there are low and mean expressions, as well as lofty and grave ones; and that some words bear the impression of coarseness and vulgarity, as clearly as others do of refinement and affection. We do not mean, of course, to say any thing in defence of the hackneyed commonplaces of ordinary versemen. Whatever might have been the original character of these unlucky phrases, they are now associated with nothing but ideas of schoolboy imbecility and vulgar affectation. But what we do maintain is, that much of the most popular poetry in the world owes its celebrity chiefly to the beauty of its diction; and that no poetry can be long or generally acceptable, the language of which is coarse, inelegant, or infantine.

From this great source of pleasure, we think, the readers of Mr. Wordsworth are in a great measure cut off. His diction has nowhere any pretensions to elegance or dignity; and he has scarcely ever condescended to give the grace of correctness or melody to his versification. If it were merely slovenly and neglected, however, all this might be endured. Strong sense and powerful feeling will ennoble any expressions; or, at least, no one who is capable of estimating those higher merits will be disposed to mark these little defects. But, in good truth, no man now-a-days composes verses for publication with a slovenly neglect of their language. It is a fine and laborious manufacture, which can scarcely ever be made in a hurry; and the faults which it has may, for the most part, be set down to bad taste or incapacity, rather than to carelessness or oversight. With Mr. Wordsworth and his friends, it is plain that their peculiarities of diction are things of choice and not of accident. They write as they do upon principle and system; and it evidently costs them much pains to keep *down* to the standard which they have proposed to themselves. They are, to the full, as much mannerists, too, as the poetasters who ring changes on the commonplaces of magazine versification; and all the difference between them is, that they borrow their phrases from a different and a scantier *Gradus ad Parnassum*. If they were, indeed, to discard all imitation and set phraseology, and to bring in no words merely for show or for metre,—as much, perhaps, might be gained in freedom and originality, as would infallibly be lost in allusion and authority; but, in point of fact, the new poets are just as great borrowers as the old; only that, instead of borrowing from the more popular passages of their illustrious predecessors, they have preferred furnishing themselves from vulgar ballads and plebeian nurseries.

Their peculiarities of diction alone are enough, perhaps, to render them ridiculous; but the author before us really seems anxious to court this literary martyrdom *by a device still* more infallible,—we mean that of

connecting his most lofty, tender, or impassioned conceptions wit
and incidents which the greater part of his readers will probabl
in thinking low, silly, or uninteresting. Whether this is done fro
tation and conceit alone, or whether it may not arise, in some n
from the self-illusion of a mind of extraordinary sensibility, ha
to solitary meditation, we cannot undertake to determine. It is
enough, we allow, that the sight of a friend's garden-spade, or a s
nest, or a man gathering leeches, might really have suggested t
mind a train of powerful impressions and interesting reflections
is certain, that, to most minds, such associations will always appea
strained, and unnatural; and that the composition in which it is at
to exhibit them will always have the air of parody, or ludicrous
fected singularity. All the world laughs at Elegiac stanzas to a s
pig—a Hymn on Washing-day—Sonnets to one's grandmother—o
rics on gooseberry-pie; and yet, we are afraid, it will not be qu
to convince Mr. Wordsworth that the same ridicule must infallibl
to most of the pathetic pieces in these volumes. To satisfy our
however, as to the justice of this and our other anticipations,
proceed, without further preface, to lay before them a short view
contents.

The first is a kind of ode "to the Daisy,"—very flat, feeble, and a
and in a diction as artificial, and as much encumbered with heav
tives, as the theme of an unpractised schoolboy. The two following
will serve as a specimen :—

> " When soothed awhile by milder airs,
> Thee winter in the garland wears
> That thinly shades his few grey hairs;
> *Spring cannot shun thee;*
> Whole summer fields are thine by right;
> And Autumn, melancholy wight!
> Doth in thy crimson head delight
> When rains are on thee.
> In shoals and bands a morrice train,
> Thou greet'st the Traveller in the lane;
> If welcome once thou count'st it gain;
> *Thou art not daunted,*
> Nor carest if thou be set at nought;
> And oft alone in nooks remote
> We meet thee, like a pleasant thought,
> *When such are wanted.*" Vol. i. p. 2.

The scope of the piece is to say, that the flower is found every
and that it has suggested many pleasant thoughts to the author
chime of fancy "*wrong or right*"—some feeling of devotion "*more*
—and other elegancies of the same stamp. It ends with this unn
prophecy :—

> " Thou long the poet's praise shalt gain;
> Thou wilt be more beloved by men
> In times to come; thou not in vain
> Art nature's favourite." Vol. i. p. 6.

The next is called "Louisa," and begins in this dashing and
manner :—

> " I met Louisa in the shade;
> And, having seen that lovely maid,
> *Why should I fear to say,*
> That she is ruddy, fleet, and *strong;*
> *And down the rocks can leap* along,
> Like rivulets in May?" Vol. i. p 7.

Mr. Wordsworth really imagine that this is at all more natural or en-
g than the ditties of our common song-writers?
ittle farther on we have another original piece, entitled, "The Red-
and the Butterfly," of which our readers will probably be contented
he first stanza.

" Art thou the bird whom man loves best,
The pious bird with the scarlet breast,
Our little English Robin;
The bird that comes about our doors
When autumn winds are sobbing?
Art thou the Peter of Norway Boors?
Their Thomas in Finland,
And Russia far inland?
The bird, whom *by some name or other*,
All men who know thee call their brother,
The darling of children and men?
Could father Adam open his eyes,
And see this sight beneath the skies,
He'd wish to close them again." Vol. i. p. 16.

s, it must be confessed, is "Silly Sooth" in good earnest. The three
nes seem to be downright raving.
and by, we have a piece of namby-pamby "to the Small Celandine,"
we should almost have taken for a professed imitation of one of Mr.
s's prettyisms. Here is a page of it:—

" Comfort have thou of thy merit,
Kindly, unassuming spirit!
Careless of thy neighbourhood,
Thou dost show thy pleasant face
On the moor, and in the wood,
In the lane;—there's not a place,
Howsoever mean it be,
But 'tis good enough for thee.
Ill befall the yellow flowers,
Children of the flaring hours!
Buttercups, that will be seen,
Whether we will see or no;
Others, too, of lofty mien;
They have done as worldlings do,
Taken praise that should be thine,
Little, humble Celandine!" Vol. i. p. 25.

er talking of its "bright coronet,"

" And its arch and wily ways,
And its store of other praise,"

lty is wound up with this piece of babyish absurdity:—

" Thou art not beyond the moon,
But a thing 'beneath our shoon;'
Let, as Old Magellan did,
Others roam about the sea;
Build who will a pyramid;
Praise it is enough for me,
If there be but three or four
Who will love my little flower." Vol. i. p. 30.

r this come some more manly lines on "The Character of the Happy
or," and a chivalrous legend on "The Horn of Egremont Castle,"
, without being very good, is very tolerable, and free from most of
thor's habitual defects. Then follow some pretty, but professedly
h verses, *on a kitten playing* with the falling leaves. There is rather

too much of Mr. Ambrose Philips here and there in this piece also; but amiable and lively.

Farther on we find an "Ode to Duty," in which the lofty vein is unsuccessfully attempted. This is the concluding stanza:—

> "Stern lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
> The Godhead's most benignant grace;
> Nor know we any thing so fair
> As is the smile upon thy face;
> Flowers laugh before thee on their beds;
> And fragrance in thy footing treads;
> Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
> And the most ancient heavens through thee are fresh and strong."
>
> Vol. i. p. 73.

The two last lines seem to be utterly without meaning; at least we have no sort of conception in what sense *Duty* can be said to keep the old skies *fresh*, and the stars from wrong.

The next piece, entitled "The Beggars," may be taken, we fancy, as a touchstone of Mr. Wordsworth's merit. There is something about it that convinces us it is a favourite of the author's; though to us, we will confess, it appears to be a very paragon of silliness and affectation. Our readers shall have the greater part of it. It begins thus:—

> "She had a tall man's height, or more;
> No bonnet screen'd her from the heat;
> A long drab-colour'd cloak she wore,
> A mantle reaching to her feet:
> What other dress she had I could not know:
> Only she wore a cap that was as white as snow.
>
> Before me begging did she stand,
> Pouring out sorrows like a sea;
> Grief after grief:—on English land
> Such woes I knew could never be;
> And yet a boon I gave her; for the creature
> Was beautiful to see, a weed of glorious feature!" Vol. i. p. 77, 78.

The poet, leaving this interesting person, falls in with two ragged boys at play, and "like that woman's face as gold is like to gold." Here is the conclusion of this memorable adventure:—

> "They bolted on me thus, and lo!
> Each ready with a plaintive whine;
> Said I, 'Not half an hour ago
> Your mother has had alms of mine.'
> 'That cannot be,' one answer'd; 'she is dead.'
> 'Nay; but I gave her pence, and she will buy you bread.'
>
> 'She has been dead, Sir, many a day.'
> 'Sweet boys, you're telling me a lie;
> 'It was your mother, as I say—'
> And in the twinkling of an eye,
> 'Come, come!' cried one; and without more ado,
> 'Off to some other play they both together flew." Vol. i. p. 79

"Alice Fell" is a performance of the same order. The poet, driving into Durham in a postchaise, hears a sort of scream; and calling to the post-boy to stop, finds a little girl crying on the back of the vehicle.

> "'My cloak!' the word was last and first,
> And loud and bitterly she wept,
> As if her very heart would burst;
> And down from off the chaise she leapt.
>
> 'What ails you, child?' She sobb'd, 'Look here!'
> I saw it in the wheel entangled;
> A weather-beaten rag as e'er
> From any garden scarecrow dangled." Vol. i. p. 85, 86.

then extricate the torn garment, and the good-natured bard he child into the carriage along with him. The narrative pro-

" 'My child, in Durham do you dwell?'
She check'd herself in her distress,
And said, 'My name is Alice Fell;
I'm fatherless and motherless.

And I to Durham, Sir, belong.'
And then, as if the thought would choke
Her very heart, her grief grew strong:
And all was for her tatter'd cloak.

The chaise drove on; our journey's end
Was nigh; and, sitting by my side,
As if she'd lost her only friend
She wept, nor would be pacified.

Up to the tavern door we post;
Of Alice and her grief I told;
And I gave money to the host,
To buy a new cloak for the old.

'And let it be of duffil grey,
As warm a cloak as man can sell!'
Proud creature was she the next day,
The little orphan, Alice Fell!" Vol. i. p. 87, 88.

e printing of such trash as this be not felt as an insult on the public e are afraid it cannot be insulted.

this follows the longest and most elaborate poem in the volume, untitle of " Resolution and Independence." The poet, roving about mmon one fine morning, falls into pensive musings on the fate of ; of song, which he sums up in this fine distich:—

" We poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof comes in the end despondency and madness." Vol. i. p. 92.

e midst of his meditations—

" I saw a man before me unawares:
The oldest man he seemed that ever wore grey hairs.

Motionless as a cloud the old man stood,
That heareth not the loud winds when they call;
And moveth altogether, if it move at all:
At length, himself unsettling, he the pond
Stirred with his staff, and fixedly did look
Upon the muddy water, which he conn'd,
As if he had been reading in a book:
And now such freedom as I could I took:
And, drawing to his side, to him did say,
'This morning gives us promise of a glorious day.'

'What kind of work is that which you pursue?
This is a lonesome place for one like you.'
He answer'd me *with pleasure and surprise;*
And there was, while he spake, a fire about his eyes.
He told me, *that he to this pond had come*
To gather leeches, being old and poor:
Employment hazardous and wearisome!
And he had many hardships to endure:
From pond to pond he roam'd, from moor to moor,
Housing, with God's good help, by choice or chance:
And in this way he gained an honest maintenance." Vol. i. pp. 92—95.

ithstanding the distinctness of this answer, the poet, it seems, was pped up in his own moody fancies, that he could not attend

" And now, not knowing what the old man had said,
My question eagerly did I renew,
'How is it that you live, and what is it you do?'
He with a smile did then his words repeat,
And said, that, *gathering leeches*, far and wide
He travelled: stirring thus *about his feet*
The waters of the ponds where they abide.
'*Once I could meet with them on every side*;
But they have dwindled long by slow decay;
Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may.'" Vol. i. pp. 96, 97.

This very interesting account, which he is lucky enough at last to comprehend, fills the poet with comfort and admiration; and, quite glad to find the old man so cheerful, he resolves to take a lesson of contentedness from him; and the poem ends with this pious ejaculation:—

" God," said I, " be my help and stay secure;
I'll think of the leech-gatherer on the lonely moor." Vol. i. p. 97.

We defy the bitterest enemy of Mr. Wordsworth to produce any thing at all parallel to this from any collection of English poetry, or even from the specimens of his friend Mr. Southey. The volume ends with some sonnets, in a very different measure, of which we shall say something by and by.

The first poems in the second volume were written during a tour in Scotland. The first is a very dull one about Rob Roy; but the title that attracted us most was, "An Address to the Sons of *Burns*, after visiting their Father's Grave." Never was any thing, however, more miserable. This is one of the four stanzas:—

" Strong bodied if ye be to bear
Intemperance with less harm, beware!
But if your father's wit ye share,
Then, then indeed,
Ye sons of Burns! for watchful care
There will be need." Vol. ii. p. 29.

The next is a very tedious, affected performance, called "The Yarrow Unvisited." The drift of it is, that the poet refused to visit this celebrated stream, because he had "a vision of his own" about it, which the reality might perhaps undo; and for this no less fantastical reason—

" Should life be dull, and spirits low,
'Twill soothe us in our sorrow,
That earth has something yet to show,
The bonny holms of Yarrow!" Vol. ii. p. 35.

After this we come to some ineffable compositions, which the poet has simply entitled, "Moods of my own Mind." One begins—

" O Nightingale! thou surely art
A creature of a fiery heart—
Thou sing'st as if the god of wine
Had help'd thee to a valentine." Vol. ii. p. 42.

This is the whole of another—

" My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The child is father of the man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety." Vol. ii. p. 44.

A third, "On a sparrow's Nest," runs thus:—

> "Look, five blue eggs are gleaming there!
> *Few visions have I seen more fair,*
> *Nor many prospects of delight*
> More pleasing than that simple sight." Vol. ii. p. 53.

The charm of this fine prospect, however, was, that it reminded him of another nest which his sister Emmeline and he had visited in their childhood.

> "She look'd at it as if she fear'd it;
> Still wishing, dreading to be near it:
> Such heart was in her, being then
> A little prattler among men," &c. Vol. ii. p. 54.

We have, then, a rapturous mystical ode to the Cuckoo; in which the author, striving after force and originality, produces nothing but absurdity.

> "O Cuckoo! shall I call thee bird,
> Or but a wandering voice!" Vol. ii. p. 57.

And then he says, that the said voice seemed to pass from hill to hill, "about and all about!"—Afterwards he assures us, it tells him "in the vale of visionary hours," and calls it a darling; but still insists, that it is

> "No bird; but an invisible thing,
> A voice—a mystery." Vol. ii. p. 58.

It is afterwards "a hope;" and "a love;" and, finally,

> "O blessed *bird!* the earth we pace
> Again appears to be
> An unsubstantial fairy place,
> That is fit home for thee!" Vol. ii. p. 59.

After this there is an address to a butterfly, whom he invites to visit him, in these simple strains:—

> "This plot of orchard ground is ours;
> My trees they are, my sister's flowers;
> Stop here whenever you are weary." Vol. ii. p. 61.

We come next to a long story of a "Blind Highland Boy," who lived near an arm of the sea, and had taken a most unnatural desire to venture on that perilous element. His mother did all she could to prevent him; but one morning, when the good woman was out of the way, he got into a vessel of his own, and pushed out from the shore.

> "In such a vessel ne'er before
> Did human creature leave the shore." Vol. ii. p. 72.

And then we are told, that if the sea should get rough, "a bee-hive would be ship as safe."—"But say, what was it?" a poetical interlocutor is made to exclaim most naturally; and here followeth the answer, upon which all the pathos and interest of the story depend:

> "A HOUSEHOLD TUB, like one of those
> Which women use to wash their clothes!" Vol. ii. p. 72.

This, it will be admitted, is carrying the matter as far as it will well go; nor is there any thing,—down to the wiping of shoes, or the evisceration of chickens,—which may not be introduced in poetry, if this is tolerated. A boat is sent out and brings the boy ashore, who being tolerably

frightened, we suppose, promises to go to sea no more; and so ends.

Then we have a poem, called "The Green Linnet," which o he poet's telling us,—

> "A whispering leaf is now my joy,
> And then a bird will be the *toy*
> That doth my fancy *tether*." Vol. ii. p. 79

And closes thus,—

> "While thus before my eyes he gleams,
> A brother of the leaves he seems;
> When in a moment forth *he teems*
> His little song in gushes;
> As if it pleas'd him to disdain
> And mock the form which he did feign,
> While he was dancing with the train
> Of leaves among the bushes." Vol. ii. p. 81.

The next is called "Star Gazers." A set of people peeping telescope all seem to come away disappointed with the sight; v thus sweetly moraliseth our poet:—

> "Yet, showman, where can lie the cause? shall thy implement have blan
> A boaster that, when he is tried, fails and is put to shame?
> Or is it good as others are, and be their eyes in fault?
> Their eyes, or minds? or, finally, is this resplendent vault?
>
> Or, is it rather, that conceit rapacious is and strong,
> And bounty never yields so much but it seems to do her wrong?
> Or, is it, that when human souls a journey long have had,
> And are returned into themselves, they cannot but be sad?" Vol. ii. p.

There are then some really sweet and amiable verses on a Fre separated from her own children, fondling the baby of a neighbo tager;—after which we have this quintessence of unmeaningne "Foresight."

> "That is work which I am *rueing*—
> Do as Charles and I are doing!
> Strawberry blossoms, one and all,
> We must spare them—here are many;
> Look at it—the flower is small,
> Small and low, though fair as any:
> Do not touch it! Summers two
> I am older, Anne, than you.
> Pull the primrose, sister Anne!
> Pull as many as you can.
>
> Primroses, the spring may love them—
> Summer knows but little of them:
> Violets, do what they will,
> Wither'd on the ground must lie;
> Daisies will be daisies still;
> Daisies they must live and die:
> Fill your lap and fill your bosom,
> Only spare the strawberry blossom!" Vol. ii. pp. 115, 116.

Afterwards come some stanzas about an echo repeating a cucko here is one for a sample:—

> "Whence the voice? from air or earth?
> *This the cuckoo cannot tell;*
> But a startling sound had birth,
> *As the bird must know full well.*" Vol. ii. p. 123.

Then we have elegiac stanzas "To the Spade of a Friend," be

" Spade! with which Wilkinson hath till'd his lands,"

oo dull to be quoted any further.

· this there is a Minstrel's Song, on the Restoration of Lord Clifford pherd, which is in a very different strain of poetry; and then the is wound up with an "Ode," with no other title but the motto, *majora canamus*. This is, beyond all doubt, the most illegible and ligible part of the publication. We can pretend to give no analysis anation of it;—our readers must make what they can of the following :—

" — But there's a tree, of many one,
A single field which I have look'd upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
The pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?" Vol. ii. p. 150.

" O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benedictions: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest;
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of childhood, whether fluttering or at rest,
With new-born hope for ever in his breast:—
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realised,
High instincts, before which our mortal nature
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised:
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish us, and make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal silence: truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
Nor man nor boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence, in a season of calm weather,
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither.
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore."
Vol. ii. pp. 154—156.

have thus gone through this publication, with a view to enable our s to determine, whether the author of the verses which have now xhibited, is entitled to claim the honours of an improver or restorer poetry, and to found a new school to supersede or new model all our s on the subject. If we were to stop here, we do not think that ordsworth, or *his admirers*, would have any reason to complain; *we have now quoted is* undeniably the most peculiar and charac-

teristic part of his publication, and must be defended and applau merit or originality of his system is to be seriously maintained own opinion, however, the demerit of that system cannot be fa cisted, until it be shown that the author of the bad verses whic already extracted can write good verses, when he pleases; a point of fact, he does always write good verses, when, by any acc led to abandon his system, and to transgress the laws of that sc how could fain establish on the ruin of all existing authority.

The length to which our extracts and observations have alread necessarily restrains us within more narrow limits in this part tions; but it will not require much labour to find a pretty decid to some of the passages we have already detailed. The song on t tion of Lord Clifford is put into the mouth of an ancient mins family; and in composing it, the author was led, therefore, a sistibly, to adopt the manner and phraseology that is understood nected with that sort of composition, and to throw aside his o incidents and fantastical sensibilities. How he has succeeded, will be able to judge from the few following extracts. The poe this spirited manner:—

> " High in the breathless hall the minstrel sate,
> And Emont's murmur mingled with the song.—
> The words of ancient time I thus translate,
> A festal strain that hath been silent long.
> From town to town, from tower to tower,
> The red rose is a gladsome flower.
> Her thirty years of winter past,
> The red rose is revived at last;
> She lifts her head for endless Spring,
> For everlasting blossoming!" Vol. ii. pp. 128, 129.

After alluding, in a very animated manner, to the troubles which drove the youth of the hero into concealment, the min ceeds:—

> " Alas! when evil men are strong
> No life is good, no pleasure long.
> The boy must part from Mosedale's groves,
> And leave Blencathera's rugged coves,
> And quit the flowers that summer brings
> To Glenderamakin's lofty springs;
> Must vanish, and his careless cheer
> Be turned to heaviness and fear.
> —Give Sir Launcelot Threlkeld praise!
> Hear it, good man, old in days!
> Thou tree of covert and of rest
> For this young bird that is distrest;
> Among thy branches safe he lay,
> And he was free to sport and play,
> When falcons were abroad for prey." Vol. ii. pp. 133, 134.

The poem closes in this manner:—

> " —Now another day is come,
> Fitter hope, and nobler doom:
> He hath thrown aside his crook,
> And hath buried deep his book;
> Armour rusting in his halls
> On the blood of Clifford calls:—
> 'Quell the Scot!' exclaims the lance;
> Bear me to the heart of France!'
> Is the longing of the shield—
> Tell thy message, thou trembling field;

Field of death, where'er thou be,
Groan thou with our victory!
Happy day, and mighty hour,
When our shepherd, in his power,
Mail'd and horsed, with lance and sword,
To his ancestors restored,
Like a re-appearing star,
Like a glory from afar,
First shall head the flock of war!"

Alas! the fervent harper did not know
That for a tranquil soul the lay was framed,
Who, long compell'd in humble walks to go,
Was softened into feeling, sooth'd, and tamed.

In him the savage virtue of the race,
Revenge, and all ferocious thoughts, were dead:
Nor did he change; but kept in lofty place
The wisdom which adversity had bred.

Glad were the vales, and every cottage hearth;
The Shepherd Lord was honour'd more and more:
And, ages after he was laid in earth,
'The good Lord Clifford' was the name he bore."

Vol. i. pp. 136—138.

l English writers of sonnets have imitated Milton; and, in this way, Wordsworth, when he writes sonnets, escapes again from the trammels s own unfortunate system; and the consequence is, that his sonnets s much superior to the greater part of his other poems, as Milton's ts are superior to his. We give the following "On the Extinction of 'enetian Republic:"—

"Once did she hold the gorgeous East in fee;
And was the safeguard of the West: the worth
Of Venice did not fall below her birth,
Venice, the eldest child of Liberty.
She was a maiden city, bright and free;
No guile seduced, no force could violate;
And when she took unto herself a mate
She must espouse the everlasting Sea.
And what if she had seen those glories fade,
Those titles vanish, and that strength decay,
Yet shall some tribute of regret be paid
When her long life hath reach'd its final day:
Men are we, and must grieve when even the shade
Of that which once was great is pass'd away." Vol. i. p. 132.

ıe following is entitled "London:"—

"Milton! thou should'st be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee: she is a fen
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart:
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea;
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on itself did lay." Vol. i. p. 140.

e make room for this other; though the four first lines are bad, and ek-day man" is by no means a Miltonic epithet.

"I grieved for Buonaparte, with a vain
And an unthinking grief! The vital blood
Of that man's mind what can it be? What food
Fed his first hopes? What knowledge could he gain?

'Tis not in battles that from youth we train
The governor who must be wise and good,
And temper with the sternness of the brain
Thoughts motherly, and meek as womanhood.
Wisdom doth live with children round her knees:
Books, leisure, perfect freedom, and the talk
Man holds with week-day man in the hourly walk
Of the mind's business: these are the degrees
By which true sway doth mount; this is the stalk
True power doth grow on; and her rights are these." Vol. i. p. 130.

When we look at these, and many still finer passages, in the writings of this author, it is impossible not to feel a mixture of indignation and compassion, at that strange infatuation which has bound him up from the fair exercise of his talents, and withheld from the public the many excellent productions that would otherwise have taken the place of the trash now before us. Even in the worst of these productions, there are, no doubt, occasional little traits of delicate feeling and original fancy; but these are quite lost and obscured in the mass of childishness and insipidity with which they are incorporated; nor can any thing give us a more melancholy view of the debasing effects of this miserable theory, than that it has given ordinary men a right to wonder at the folly and presumption of a man gifted like Mr. Wordsworth, and made him appear, in his second avowed publication, like a bad imitator of the worst of his former productions.

We venture to hope, that there is now an end of this folly; and that, like other follies, it will be found to have cured itself by the extravagancies resulting from its unbridled indulgence. In this point of view, the publication of the volumes before us may ultimately be of service to the good cause of literature. Many a generous rebel, it is said, has been reclaimed to his allegiance by the spectacle of lawless outrage and excess presented in the conduct of the insurgents; and we think there is every reason to hope, that the lamentable consequences which have resulted from Mr. Wordsworth's open violation of the established laws of poetry, will operate as a wholesome warning to those who might otherwise have been seduced by his example, and be the means of restoring to that ancient and venerable code its due honour and authority.*

SOUTHEY. †

We admire the genius of Mr. Southey; we reverence the lofty principles, and we love the tenderness of heart, that are visible in all his productions. But we are heartily provoked at his conceit and bad taste, and quite wearied out with the perversity of his manifold affectations. Not many poets, dead or living, have given proofs of a finer fancy, or drawn more copiously from the stores of a rich and cultivated imagination: still fewer have maintained a sublimer tone of sentiment,—or pictured, in more enchanting colours, the simple and innocent affections of our nature; and none has ever "made these rich gifts poor" by such an obstinate strain of

* See Vol. xxiv. p. 1. Vol. xxv. p. 355. and Vol. xxxvii. p. 449., in which Wordsworth's other works are reviewed.

† Southey's Curse of Kehama.—Vol. xvii. p. 429. February, 1811.

childish affectation; or so perversely defrauded the world of the delight, and himself of the glory, which they were intended by nature to produce.

It is this mixed feeling of provocation and delight, that has given that contradictory character to our observations on Mr. Southey's former productions; which, we fear, may have brought our judgment into disrepute with the more uncharitable part of our readers. Our praise and our blame, we suspect, have appeared to be both too strong, to be justly applicable to one and the same performance; and we have been accused, alternately, of malice and of partiality, by those who will not understand, that a long poem may afford matter both for just ridicule and for just admiration. Mr. Southey's case, indeed, we have always considered as an extreme one; and, however awkwardly the censure and applause may stand together in our pages, we must be permitted to say, that nothing could be more sincere and conscientious than our expression of both these feelings; and that it appears to us, that no other expressions could have done full justice to the extraordinary performances by which they were excited. It is Mr. Southey himself that is the grand inconsistent; and the more truly we are charmed by the brilliancy of his imagination, and the truth and delicacy of his feelings, the more we must be offended by the wilful deformities by which he has rendered vain the combination of so many beauties.

Mr. Southey, of course, despises equally our censure and our advice; and we have no quarrel with him for this. We have been too long conversant with the untractable generation of authors to expect that our friendly expostulations should have any effect upon them,—except as exponents of the silent, practical judgment of the public. To that superior tribunal, however, we do think ourselves entitled to refer; and while we, who profess the stately office of correcting and instructing, are yet willing, in most things, to bow to its authority, we really cannot help thinking, that a poet, whose sole object is to give delight and to gain glory, ought to show something of the same docility.

There is, indeed, another and a final appeal—to Posterity,—from the benefit of which we are very far from wishing to exclude any unfortunate persons whose circumstances may reduce them to rely on it. But the cases, we believe, are wonderfully rare, in which that mysterious and inaccessible Judge has ever reversed the *unfavourable* sentences of the ordinary jurisdictions; and there seems even to be great reason for thinking, that such reversals will be still fewer in time to come. Without resting much upon the superior intelligence of the present age, we believe we may safely pass a large encomium on its indulgence; and may be fairly allowed to doubt, whether any time is at all likely to come, in which every sort of merit will be so sure of being detected and extolled, in spite, and sometimes in consequence, of the incongruities and deformities with which it may be associated. Things are wonderfully changed in this respect, since a licentious and illiterate age withheld from Milton the fame which its successor was so proud to bestow. Poetry is read now, we suppose, by very nearly ten times as many persons; and fifty times as many think themselves judges of poetry; and are eager for an opportunity to glorify themselves as its patrons, by exaggerating the merit of some obscure or dubious writer, in whose reputation they may be entitled to share by contributing to raise it. Thus, in our own time, we have had Mrs. H. More patronising Mrs. Yearsley the milkwoman; and Mr. Capel Lofft bringing

forward Mr. Bloomfield the shoemaker; and Mr. Raymond Grant challenging immortality for Mr. Dermody the drunkard; and Sir James Bland Burgess and Sir Brooke Boothby, and Miss Aikin and Miss Holford, and fifty others, patronising themselves, and each other, with the most laudable zeal and exemplary activity. Now, whatever may be its other effects, it is certain that all this competition for patronage and discovery ensures notoriety, and a certain *viaticum* of praise, to almost every poetical adventurer; and takes away almost the possibility of that neglect which, in former times, stood so often in the way, not merely of reputation, but of fair trial. That a great deal of false reputation will be raised, under such circumstances, and various lots of undeserved and perishable praise be awarded by vanity, partiality, and caprice, cannot indeed be doubted; but it is not so easy to conceive, that any real merit should escape detection, or miss honour, in this sanguine search after excellence, —that the active manure which quickens so many colder seeds should not stimulate the more sensitive fibres of genius,—or that the bright sun, which gilds, with a passing glory, the idle weeds of literature, should fail to kindle into beauty the splendid blossoms of poetry.

But, leaving Mr. Southey the full benefit of his chance with posterity, it is enough for us to observe, that his appeal to the present generation has now been made with sufficient fulness and deliberation; and that the decision, as we understand it, has not only confirmed, but outgone, all that we had predicted as to the fatal effects of his peculiarities. During the last fifteen years, he has put forth (besides the present work) three very long poems,—no one of which, we think, can be said to have succeeded. That they have all had some readers, and some admirers, we do not mean to dispute; nay, there are many who pass for tolerable judges in such matters, who think they have had a very strange and unaccountable success: but the author, and his admirers, and his booksellers, are not by any means of that opinion; and we, for our parts, have no hesitation in saying, that they have not had nearly so much success as it appears to us that they deserve. There have been three editions, we believe, of Joan of Arc—two of Thalaba—and one only of Madoc,—though the last has been six years in the hands of the public,—and of a public which has called, during the same interval, for more than ten editions of the Farmer's Boy, and five or six, if we do not mistake, of the Wanderer of Switzerland.

This, we think, is pretty strong testimony against the *taste* of a poet, whose *genius*, we believe, was never lowered, even among those who neglect him, to a comparison with that of Mr. Bloomfield, or Mr. Montgomery. But the inference is still stronger, when we consider the circumstances under which this testimony has been given. Mr. Southey is no longer in his noviciate. Though still in the vigour of life, he has been a full-fledged and industrious author for nearly twenty years; and has not wanted, as we ourselves can testify, for advice and admonition, both laudatory and vituperative. With all these advantages, however, and means of improvement, we are afraid that he is rather less in favour with the public than he was at the beginning of his career. His first poem was decidedly more successful than his second,—and his second than his third: yet his genius certainly is in no degree impaired; and his judgment *and powers of execution* may be fairly presumed to have received some *improvement*. When we find him rather on the decline, therefore, in

olic estimation, and discover that his fame, instead of gathering bright-
s as his course is prolonged, seems rather to waste away and wax dim,
is difficult to suppose that this proceeds from any thing but the misap-
cation of acknowledged powers, and the obstinacy with which he has
rsisted in errors of which he received very early warning. The public
naturally disposed to be very kind to the errors of youthful genius; and
is entitled, in this case, to look for the speedy correction of faults, for
nich mere inexperience could scarcely at any time be received as an apo-
gy. If such faults, therefore, are long persisted in, their indulgence will
gradually exhausted. What was at first ascribed to inadvertence, will
w be referred, with some appearance of justice, to bad taste and per-
rsity; and the reader will turn away, disappointed and disgusted, from
ostentatious display of absurdities that are no longer original.

There is one other peculiarity in the state of Mr. Southey's poetical re-
itation, from which, we think, that he should take warning, while it is yet
ne. His admirers, we fear, are not the very best sort of admirers. In
far as we have been able to gather, there are but few persons of cultivated
ste and sober judgment in his train; and his glories are celebrated, we
ink, chiefly by the young, the enthusiastic, and the uninstructed;—per-
ons whose fancies are easily captivated with glitter, exaggeration and no-
elty, and whose exuberant sensibility is apt to flame out at the approach
ven of the false fire of bombast and affectation. Not many of the admirers
f the ancient or the modern classics are admirers of Mr. Southey; and
any of those who applaud him the most warmly, can discover no merit in
ose celebrated performances. We do not purpose by any means to
eny that there are many dull and weak persons among the professed ad-
irers of Homer and Virgil; and that there is much natural feeling in
he description of readers whom we have supposed to take delight in Mr.
outhey. But it is not of good augury, we think, for his future fame, that
is supporters should be all of this description; and that almost all those
hould be against him, who have any decided relish for what has hitherto
een found enduring in poetry. So, however, we take the case very nearly
o be. Almost all nice critics and fastidious judges, and the greater part
ndeed of men of improved and delicate taste, not only refuse to admire Mr.
outhey and his colleagues, but treat them with absolute contempt and de-
ision—wonder at such of their friends as profess to think favourably of
heir genius—and look upon the circumstance of their having made a kind
f party in the literary world, as one of the most humiliating events in the
ecent history of that great society. For our own part, we are a good deal
ess difficult; and shall continue to testify in favour of Mr. Southey's talents
nd genius, as resolutely as against his peculiarities and affectations;—con-
idering it indeed as our chief duty, in this matter, to counteract the neglect
nto which he seems to be falling, both by endeavouring to correct the faults
y which it is provoked, and by pointing out the excellences by which those
aults are at once enhanced and redeemed.

But, though we cannot sympathise with the undiscriminating scorn and
weeping reprobation which Mr. Southey meets with in very respectable
uarters, we think we can see very clearly how such feelings should have
een excited; and are very ready to enter into sentiments, which we think,
t the same time, have in this instance been carried greatly too far. Mr.
outhey's faults are peculiarly glaring; and to all improved understandings,
e *admit, peculiarly offensive*:—but they are combined, in him, with

great gifts and great acquirements and ought not to be alone remembered in his final accounting with the public. We have said enough of these faults on former occasions; and shall not enter again at large upon the invidious task of classing or illustrating them. If we were to express them all in one word—that word should be *childishness*;—and indeed it is very curious to trace the effects of this quality in all the departments of his poetry.

His taste in description is as remarkably childish, as his powers of execution, in this branch of his art, are rare and admirable. Every thing, in his pictures, is gaudy and glittering, and fantastically exaggerated and contrasted. His landscapes are full of coloured light, and gems, and metallic splendour; and sparkle with such portentous finery, as to remind us of the old-fashioned grottos and shell-work of the last generation, or the gilded caverns and full-lighted transparencies of the opera-house. His excessive love of the marvellous and gigantic is a symptom not less decisive; and his delineations of persons and of affection are still more strongly marked with the same infantine character. He seems to think grown men and women too corrupt and hardened for poetical purposes;—and, therefore, all his interesting personages lisp like sucklings; and his unamiable ones are, as nearly as possible, such sort of monsters as nurses imagine to frighten naughty boys into obedience. There is little other passion in his poetry, than what arises from the natural affection of fathers and daughters, or brothers and sisters; and from that calm, pure, subdued sort of love which may be indulged by dutiful children under the immediate inspection of their parents. All their pleasures, and pastimes, and occupations, too, are evidently borrowed from the same age of innocence;—and the picture of society that is offered to us rarely extends beyond the domestic privacy of a small secluded family.

We do not say, that all this may not be very sweet and interesting,—and even that Mr. Southey does not often make us feel how very beautifully it may be represented;—but the tone is too weak to strike with sufficient force on the ear of an ordinary reader; and is by far too uniform not to pall upon any one who is doomed to pursue it through a series of long poems. There is no variety of human character in all Mr. Southey's productions. Men are never brought forward to contend with men in the management of great affairs; or to display those social or lofty qualities by which they are enabled, in real life, to attach or to command their fellows. If Mr. Southey wants a living instance of the value of such elements, we would remind him of the signal success with which Mr. Scott has given the strong interest of reality to his most fanciful delineations, by this perpetual interposition of intelligible motives and familiar principles; and has, at the same time, imparted a spirit, and force, and variety to his pictures, by keeping his readers perpetually engaged with events and persons that bear a character of historical importance; instead of soothing them, like the author before us, with the virtues and affections, as well as the marvels and legends of the nursery.

All this, however, would have been greatly more tolerable, if the poet had condescended to assume the lowly tone that is suitable to such subjects and feelings. If he had been contented to leave the loftier regions of the Epic to more potent and daring spirits, and addressed himself to youths and virgins in soft and unambitious strains, we have no doubt that he would soon have found a fit and willing audience, and been left, by those who were careless of such themes, to pursue them in his own circle without let or *molestation*. But he has imprudently challenged the attention of a far *wider and less* tractable auditory;—he has come with his whistle, and his

gilded book of fairy tales, into the assemblies of bearded men, and audibly undervalued all other instruments and studies. The kind of conceit, indeed, and arrogance, that is visible in this author and his associates, is still more provoking than their childishness,—or rather, is that which makes their childishness so offensive. While gravely preferring the tame vulgarity of our old ballads, to the nervous and refined verses of Pope or Johnson, they lay claim, not to indulgence, but to admiration; and treat almost the whole of our classical poets with the most supercilious neglect; while they speak in an authoritative tone of the beauties of George Wither and Henry More. With such ludicrous auxiliaries, they wage a desperate war on the established system of public taste and judgment,—and waste their great talents in an attempt, the success of which is as hopeless as it would be lamentable, and which all their genius cannot save from being ridiculous.

The last unfortunate accompaniment of Mr. Southey's childishness is the perpetual artifice and effort that is visible in every part of his performances. We do not mean to say, that he has not great facility of diction, and copiousness of imagery; but there is always too apparent a resolution to make the most of every thing—a kind of rhetorical exaggeration (according to his own notions of rhetoric)—a determination to miss no opportunity of being fine and striking—and an anxiety to present every thing, great or small, under the most imposing and advantageous aspect. The general principle, no doubt, is highly laudable, and, we suppose, is common to all who write for glory; but what we complain of is, that it is by far too visible, and too indiscriminately indulged, in the works of this author. If there be any room or apology whatever for a description, it is sure to be thrust in—elaborately finished—and extended to a vast length; and if any striking sentiment or event is about to be brought forward, such a note of preparation is sounded, and so much care taken to ensure it a favourable and conspicuous introduction, as to give the reader rather a distressing impression of the labour the author has bestowed on his composition, and of the great value he attaches even to the meanest of his ingredients.

It is difficult for us to believe, that Mr. Southey has ever rejected or suppressed any idea that he thought might be introduced with the smallest prospect of success; or has ever regarded any of so little importance, as to deserve only a slight and incidental notice. In his poetry, therefore, we have not a selection of the thoughts and images that have occurred to him: but we seem to have them *all*—and to have them all dilated and worked up with nearly the same fond and indiscriminate anxiety. He seems, in short, to have as excessive a love for his own genius as Ovid, or the long-winded Spaniards and Italians of the sixteenth century; and to think as little of sparing his readers any thing which his own reading or reflection had once suggested to his imagination. The effect of all this is, not only to make his poetry very diffuse, and to give it a general air of heaviness and labour, but to deprive his felicities of their greatest grace, and to render his failures inexpiable.

There is nothing so charming in poetry, as that appearance of perfect ease and carelessness which makes the result, perhaps of long study, appear like the spontaneous effusion of a superior or inspired mind; and at once raises the reader, as it were, into the society of a higher order of beings, whose common language and habits of thought bear a stamp of vigour and sublimity far above the reach of ordinary mortals. This charm, however, is destroyed, the moment that we are permitted to look behind the scenes, and to catch a peep of the operose and toilsome machinery by which the

effect is produced. Nor can any secret be of more importance for a poet to keep from his readers, than that of the time he has spent, and the difficulties he has encountered, in the course of his composition. This maxim, we think, was well understood by the older writers; among whom it is rare to find any marks of extraordinary pains, either to introduce or to bring out their favourite images or conceptions. We do not speak of the labour occasionally bestowed, and visibly enough, on their diction or versification; but, with reference to the more substantial qualities of thought and fancy, we think there are few poets of established character who can be reproached, in any considerable degree, with the fault we impute to Mr. Southey. On the contrary, it will be found, that almost all their beauties appear to have been produced by accident; and that their fine passages are both brought in and concluded, with an apparent unconsciousness of their superior merit. They are neither introduced with any sort of parade, nor dwelt upon with any protracted complacency. They open quietly upon the eye of the reader as he advances: and disappear again long before he is satiated with beholding them. He is never diverted from his path to catch a striking view of them: nor made to linger in its windings till all their sweetness is exhausted.

The practice of Mr. Southey, and of many other modern writers of inferior note, is directly the reverse of this; nor indeed is there any fault more characteristic of our modern poetry, and perhaps of our literature in general, than the offensive anxiety that our authors are continually showing to make the most of their talents and their materials—to miss no occasion to astonish and transport the reader,—and to take special care that nothing which they think beautiful or important shall pass unobserved, or be dismissed till its merits have been fully pointed out, and made apparent to the most negligent and inattentive. It is this miserable trick of over-rating the importance of all our conceptions, that has made our recent literature so intolerably diffuse and voluminous. No man, for example, has now the forbearance to write essays as short as Hume's, even if he had talents to make them as good; nor will any one be contented with stating his views and arguments in a popular and consise manner, and leaving them to their fate; but we must have long speculative introductions—illustrations and digressions—objections anticipated and answered—verbose apologies, at once fulsome and modest—practical inferences—historical deductions—and predictions as to the effect of our doctrines, or the neglect of them, on the fate of men, and of the universe, in all time coming. In poetry, again, a great part of our modern authors seem equally averse to throw away the rubbish of their imaginations; and when they do hit upon any thing which seems to them of more than ordinary value, never fail to exert themselves notably to ensure the reader's attention to it. It is introduced either with startling abruptness, or slow and pompous preparation; and is turned into all possible lights, and repeated in all possible forms, and with every possible encouragement and suasory to admiration. The consequence of all which is, that the whole spirit, lightness, and nature of the thought is extinguished; and the reader left oppressed with a sense of fatigue, heaviness, and confusion.

But if this tone of perpetual effort and ambition prove so injurious to the effect of the very passages in which a poet is most successful, it is a thousand times worse where he experiences any failure or miscarriage. If a man says a dull thing in a low tone and quiet manner, it is very likely to escape *notice,—and is* almost sure to escape derision;—but if he utter an inconceivable *stupidity* in an emphatic and arrogant accent, and after taking great

pains to prepare his hearers for something very impressive,—the ridicule is irresistible, and its effect scarcely ever to be got over. Now, the poets who are at so much trouble to force all their bright thoughts on the notice of their readers, *sometimes* mistake for a bright thought what appears to others purely nonsensical or affected; and thus give rise to associations that are neither very favourable to their reputation, nor very easily dissolved. Where there is no visible effort, though there may be dulness, there can scarcely be failure; and the reader who is not gratified, may still retain his faith in the taste and judgment of the author,—and impute his want of brilliancy to an intractable subject, or a moment of negligence or inattention: but, the instant that he fails in a strenuous and open attempt on his admiration, there is an end to apology and toleration;—there is then evident proof of weakness, where a feat of strength was intended,—and of open and irreconcilable differences as to the fundamental articles of his mystery. In our classical poets, accordingly, though there is abundance of flat passages, we scarcely recollect any instance of egregious failure. In Mr. Southey and Mr. Wordsworth, and in the German dramatists whom they seem to copy, we meet with them perpetually: nor is it possible, even for great genius and originality, to prevent the combination of childishness with an unremitting effort at force and sublimity, from producing passages which chill the unwary reader with a mixture of shame, provocation, and compassion.*

CAMPBELL. †

We rejoice once more to see a polished and pathetic poem, in the old style of English pathos and poetry. This is of the pitch of the Castle of Indolence, and the finer parts of Spenser; with more feeling, in many places, than the first, and more condensation and diligent finishing than the latter. If the true tone of nature be not every where maintained, it gives place, at least, to art only, and not to affectation—and, least of all, to affectation of singularity or rudeness.

Beautiful as the greater part of this volume is, the public taste, we are afraid, has of late been too much accustomed to beauties of a more obtrusive and glaring kind, to be fully sensible of its merit. Without supposing that this taste has been in any great degree vitiated, or even imposed upon, by the babyism or the antiquarianism which have lately been versified for its improvement, we may be allowed to suspect, that it has been somewhat dazzled by the splendour, and bustle, and variety of the most popular of our recent poems; and that the more modest colouring of truth and nature may, at this moment, seem somewhat cold and feeble. We have endeavoured, on former occasions, to do justice to the force and originality of some of these brilliant productions, as well as to the genius (fitted for much higher things) of their authors—and have little doubt of being soon called upon for a renewed tribute of applause. But we cannot help saying, in the

* For reviews of Southey's other works, see Vol. i. p. 63. Vol. vii. p. 1. Vol. xi. p. 31. Vol. xxii. p. 447. Vol. xxv. p. 1. Vol. xxvi. p. 441. Vol. xxviii. p. 151. Vol. xxxv. p. 422. Vol. l. p. 528.

† Gertrude of *Wyoming, a Pennsylvanian* Tale; and other Poems. By Thomas Campbell.—*Vol. xiv. p. 1. April, 1809.*

mean time, that the work before us belongs to a class which comes nearer to our conception of pure and perfect poetry. Such productions do not, indeed, strike so strong a blow as the vehement effusions of our modern *Trouveurs;* but they are calculated, we think, to please more deeply, and to call out more permanently, those trains of emotion, in which the delight of poetry will probably be found to consist. They may not be so loudly nor so universally applauded; but their fame will probably endure longer, and they will be oftener recalled to mingle with the reveries of solitary leisure, or the consolations of real sorrow.

There is a sort of poetry, no doubt, as there is a sort of flowers, which can bear the broad sun and the ruffling winds of the world,—which thrive under the hands and eyes of indiscriminating multitudes, and please as much in hot and crowded saloons, as in their own sheltered repositories; but the finer and the purer sorts blossom only in the shade, and never give out their sweets but to those who seek them amid the quiet and seclusion of the scenes which gave them birth. There are torrents and cascades which attract the admiration of tittering parties, and of which even the busy must turn aside to catch a transient glance; but "the haunted stream" steals through a still and a solitary landscape; and its beauties are never revealed, but to him who strays, in calm contemplation, by its course, and follows its wanderings with undistracted andun impatient admiration. There is a reason, too, for all this, which may be made more plain than by metaphors.

The highest delight which poetry produces, does not arise from the mere passive perception of the images or sentiments which it presents to the mind, but from the excitement which is given to its own eternal activity, and the character which is impressed on the train of its spontaneous conceptions. Even the dullest reader generally sees more than is directly presented to him by the poet; but a lover of poetry always sees infinitely more; and is often indebted to his author for little more than an impulse, or the key-note of a melody, which his fancy makes out for itself. Thus, the effect of poetry depends more on the *fruitfulness* of the impressions to which it gives rise, than on their own individual force or novelty; and the writers who possess the greatest powers of fascination, are not those who present us with the greatest number of lively images or lofty sentiments, but who most successfully impart their own impulse to the current of our thoughts and feelings, and give the colour of their brighter conceptions to those which they excite in us. Now, upon a little consideration, it will probably appear, that the dazzling, and the busy and marvellous scenes which constitute the whole charm of some poems, are not so well calculated to produce this effect, as those more intelligible delineations which are borrowed from ordinary life, and coloured from familiar affections. The object is, to awaken in our minds a train of kindred emotions, and to excite our imaginations to work out for themselves a tissue of pleasing or impressive conceptions. But it seems obvious, that this is more likely to be accomplished by surrounding us gradually with those objects, and involving us in those situations, with which we have long been accustomed to associate the feelings of the poet,—than by startling us with some tale of wonder, or attempting to engage our affections for personages, of whose character and condition we are little able to form any conception. These, indeed, are more sure than the other to produce a momentary sensation, by the novelty and exaggeration *with which they* are commonly attended; but their power is spent at the

impulse; they do not strike root and germinate in the mind, like the ls of its native feelings; nor propagate throughout the imagination that g series of delightful movements, which is only excited when the song ne poet is the echo of our familiar feelings.

t appears to us, therefore, that by far the most powerful and enchanting try is that which depends for its effect upon the just representation of mon feelings and common situations, and not on the strangeness of its dents, or the novelty or exotic splendour of its scenes and characters. difficulty is, no doubt, to give the requisite force, elegance, and dignity hese ordinary subjects, and to win a way for them to the heart, by that e and concise expression of natural emotion, which is among the rarest s of inspiration. To accomplish this, the poet must do much; and reader something. The one must practice enchantment, and the other mit to it. The one must purify his conceptions from all that is low or ificial; and the other must lend himself gently to the impression, and rain from disturbing it by any movement of worldly vanity, derision, or rdheartedness. In an advanced state of society, the expression of simple notion is so obstructed by ceremony, or so distorted by affectation, that ough the sentiment itself be still familiar to the greater part of mankind, e verbal representation of it is a task of the utmost difficulty. One set writers, accordingly, finding the whole language of men and women too phisticated for this purpose, have been obliged to go to the nursery for a ore suitable phraseology; another has adopted the style of courtly Arcad- ns; and a third, that of mere Bedlamites. So much more difficult is it to press natural feelings, than to narrate battles, or describe prodigies!

But even when the poet has done his part, there are many causes which ay obstruct his immediate popularity. In the first place, it requires a cer- in degree of sensibility to perceive his merit. There are thousands of ople who can admire a florid description, or be amused with a wonderful tory, to whom a pathetic poem is quite unintelligible. In the second place, requires a certain degree of leisure and tranquillity. A picturesque stanza ay be well enough relished while the reader is getting his hair combed; ut a sense of tenderness or emotion will not do for the corner of a crowded rawing-room. Finally, it requires a certain degree of courage to proclaim he merits of such a writer. Those who feel the most deeply, are most given o disguise their feelings; and derision is never so agonising as when it ounces on the wanderings of misguided sensibility. Considering the habits f the age in which we live, therefore, and the fashion, which, though not mmutable, has for some time run steadily in an opposite direction, we should not be much surprised if a poem, whose chief merit consisted in its pathos, and in the softness and exquisite tenderness of its representations of domestic life and romantic seclusion, should meet with less encouragement than it deserves. If the volume before us were the work of an unknown writer, indeed, we should feel no little apprehension about its success; but Mr. Campbell's name has power, we are persuaded, to ensure a very par- tial and a very general attention to whatever it accompanies, and, we would fain hope, influence enough to reclaim the public taste to a juster standard of excellence. The success of his former work, indeed, goes far to remove our anxiety for the fortune of this. It contained, perhaps, more brilliant and bold passages than are to be found in the poem before us; but it was inferior, we think, *in softness and* beauty; and, being necessarily of a more *desultory and didactic character,* had far less pathos and interest than this

very simple tale. Those who admired the Pleasures of Hope for the passage about Brama and Kosciusko, may perhaps be somewhat disappointed with the gentler tone of Gertrude; but those who loved that charming work for its pictures of infancy and of maternal and connubial love, may read on here with the assurance of a still higher gratification.

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We close this volume, on the whole, with feelings of regret for its shortness, and of admiration for the genius of its author. There are but two noble sorts of poetry,—the pathetic and the sublime; and we think he has given very extraordinary proofs of his talents for both. There is something, too, we will venture to add, in the style of many of his conceptions, which irresistibly impresses us with the conviction, that he can do much greater things than he has hitherto accomplished; and leads us to regard him, even yet, as a poet of still greater promise than performance. It seems to us as if the natural force and boldness of his ideas were habitually checked by a certain fastidious timidity, and an anxiety about the minor graces of correct and chastened composition. Certain it is, at least, that his greatest and most lofty flights have been made in those smaller pieces, about which, it is natural to think, he must have felt least solicitude; and that he has succeeded most splendidly where he must have been most free from the fear of failure. We wish any praises or exhortations of ours had the power to give him confidence in his own great talents; and hope earnestly, that he will now meet with such encouragement, as may set him above all restraints that proceed from apprehension, and induce him to give free scope to that genius, of which we are persuaded that the world has hitherto seen rather the grace than the richness. *

PROFESSOR WILSON. †

This is a new recruit to the company of lake poets;—and one who, from his present bearing, promises, we think, not only to do them good service, and to rise to high honours in the corps; but to raise its name, and advance its interests, even among the tribes of the unbelievers. Though he wears openly the badge of their peculiarities, and professes the most humble devotion to their great captain, Mr. Wordsworth, we think he has kept clear of several of the faults that may be imputed to his preceptors; and assumed, upon the whole, a more attractive and conciliating air, than the leaders he has chosen to follow. He has the same predilection, indeed, for engrafting powerful emotions on ordinary occurrences; and the same tendency to push all his emotions a great deal too far—the same disdain of all worldly enjoyments and pursuits—and the same occasional mistakes, as to energy and simplicity of diction, which characterise the works of his predecessors. But he differs from them in this very important particular, that though he

* I have not thought it necessary to add to the above beautiful remarks on the character of Campbell's poetry the outline which the reviewer has given of the poem of "Gertrude," or the passages he has selected to justify the decision he has pronounced. The concluding remarks on the genius and talents of Mr. Campbell are in accordance with the sentiments frequently expressed in the Edinburgh Review in reference to that delightful poet. (See a review of his "Specimens of British Poetry," Vol. xxxi. and of his "Theodric," Vol. xli. p. 271.)

† *Wilson's Isle of Palms, and other Poems.*—Vol. xix. p. 373. February, 1812.

does generally endeavour to raise a train of lofty and pathetic sensations upon very trifling incidents and familiar objects, and frequently pursues them to a great height of extravagance and exaggeration, he is scarcely ever guilty of the offence of building them upon a foundation that is ludicrous or purely fantastic. He makes more, to be sure, of a sleeping child, or a lonely cataract—and flies into greater raptures about female purity and moonlight landscapes, and fine dreams, and flowers, and singing-birds—than most other poets permit themselves to do,—though it is of the very essence of poetry to be enraptured with such things:—but he does not break out into any ecstacies about spades or sparrows' eggs—or men gathering leeches—or women in duffle cloaks—or plates and porringers—or washing tubs—or any of those baser themes which poetry was always permitted to disdain, without any impeachment of her affability, till Mr. Wordsworth thought fit to force her into an acquaintance with them.

Though Mr. Wilson may be extravagant, therefore, he is not perverse; and though the more sober part of his readers may not be able to follow him to the summit of his sublimer sympathies, they cannot be offended at the invitation, or even refuse to grant him their company to a certain distance on the journey. The objects for which he seeks to interest them are all objects of natural interest; and the emotions which he connects with them are, in some degree, associated with them in all reflecting minds. It is the great misfortune of Mr. Wordsworth, on the contrary, that he is exceedingly apt to make choice of subjects which are not only unfit in themselves to excite any serious emotion, but naturally present themselves to ordinary minds as altogether ridiculous; and, consequently, to revolt and disgust his readers by an appearance of paltry affectation, or incomprehensible conceit. We have the greatest respect for the genius of Mr. Wordsworth, and the most sincere veneration for all we have heard of his character; but it is impossible to contemplate the injury he has done to his reputation by this poor ambition of originality, without a mixed sensation of provocation and regret. We are willing to take it for granted, that the spades, and the eggs, and the tubs which he commemorates, actually suggested to him all the emotions and reflections of which he has chosen to make them the vehicles; but they surely are not the only objects which have suggested similar emotions; and we really cannot understand why the circumstance of their being quite unfit to suggest them to any other person should have recommended them as their best accompaniments in an address to the public. We do not want Mr. Wordsworth to write like Pope or Prior, nor to dedicate his muse to subjects which he does not himself think interesting. We are prepared, on the contrary, to listen with a far deeper delight to the songs of his mountain solitude, and to gaze on his mellow pictures of simple happiness and affection, and his lofty sketches of human worth and energy; and we only beg, that we may have these nobler elements of his poetry, without the debasement of childish language, mean incidents, and incongruous images. We will not run the risk of offending him, by hinting at the prosperity of Scott, or Campbell, or Crabbe; but he cannot be scandalised, we think, if we refer him to the example of the dutiful disciple and fervent admirer who is now before us; and entreat him to consider whether he may not conscientiously abstain from those peculiarities which even Mr. Wilson has not thought it safe to imitate.

Mr. Wilson is not free from some of the faults of diction which, we think, belong *to his school.* He is occasionally mystical, and not seldom

childish; but he has less of these peculiarities than most of his associates: and there is one more important fault from which, we think, he has escaped altogether. We allude now to the offensive assumption of exclusive taste, judgment, and morality, which pervades most of the writings of this tuneful brotherhood. There is a tone of tragic, keen, and intolerant reprobation in all the censures they bestow, that is not a little alarming to ordinary sinners. Every thing they do not like is accursed, and pestilent, and inhuman; and they can scarcely differ from any body upon a point of criticism, politics, or metaphysics, without wondering what a heart he must have; and expressing, not merely dissent, but loathing and abhorrence. Neither is it very difficult to perceive, that they think it barely possible for any one to have any just notion of poetry, any genuine warmth of affection or philanthropy, or any large views as to the true principles of happiness and virtue, who does not agree with them in most of their vagaries, and live a life very nearly akin to that which they have elected for themselves. The inhabitants of towns, therefore, and most of those who are engaged in the ordinary business or pleasures of society, are cast off without ceremony as *demoralised and denaturalised* beings; and it would evidently be a considerable stretch of charity in these new apostles of taste and wisdom, to believe that any one of this description could have a genuine relish for the beauties of nature—could feel any ardent or devoted attachment to another,—or even comprehend the great principles upon which private and public virtue must be founded. Mr. Wilson, however, does not seem to believe in the necessity of this extraordinary monopoly; but speaks with a tone of indulgent and open sociality, which is as engaging as the jealous and assuming manner of some of his models is offensive. The most striking characteristic, indeed, as well as the great charm of the volume before us, is the spirit of warm and unaffected philanthropy which breathes over every page of it—that delighted tenderness with which the writer dwells on the bliss of childhood, and the dignity of female innocence—and that young enthusiasm which leads him to luxuriate in the descriptions of beautiful nature and the joys of a life of retirement. If our readers can contrive to combine these distinguishing features with our general reference of the author to the school of Wordsworth and Southey, they will have as exact a conception of his poetical character as can be necessary to prepare them for a more detailed account of the works that are now offered to their perusal. *

BARRY CORNWALL.†

A good imitation of what is excellent is generally preferable to original mediocrity:—only it provokes dangerous comparisons—and makes failures more conspicuous—and sometimes reminds us that excellent things are imitable by their faults—and that too diligent a study of the wonders of Art is apt to lead into some forgetfulness of the beauties of Nature.

In spite of all these dangers, we must say that the author before us is a

* See another review of Wilson's poetry, equally complimentary. Vol. xxvi. p. 458.

† A Sicilian Story, and other Poems. By Barry Cornwall.—Vol. xxxiii. p. 144. January, 1820.

very good imitator—and unquestionably, for the most part, of very good models. His style is chiefly moulded, and his versification modulated, on the pattern of Shakspeare, and the other dramatists of that glorious age—particularly Marlow, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger. He has also copied something from Milton and Ben Jonson, and the amorous cavaliers of the Usurpation—and then passing disdainfully over all the intermediate writers, has flung himself fairly into the arms of Lord Byron, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Leigh Hunt.—This may be thought, perhaps, rather a violent transition; and likely to lead to something of an incongruous mixture. But the materials really harmonise very tolerably; and the candid reader of the work will easily discover the secret of this amalgamation.

In the *first* place, Mr. Cornwall is himself a poet—and one of no mean rate;—and not being a maker of parodies or centos, he does not imitate by indiscriminately caricaturing the prominent peculiarities of his models, or crowding together their external or mechanical characteristics—but merely disciplines his own genius in the school of theirs—and tinges the creatures of his fancy with the colouring which glows in theirs. In the *next* place, and what is much more important, it is obvious that a man may imitate Shakspeare and his great compeers, without presuming to rival their variety or universality, and merely by endeavouring to copy one or two of their many styles and excellences.—This is the case with Mr. C. He does not meddle with the thunders and lightnings of the mighty poet, and still less with his boundless humour and fresh-springing merriment. He has nothing to do with Falstaff or Silence; and does not venture himself in the lists with Macbeth, or Lear, or Othello. It is the tender, the sweet, and the fanciful only, that he aspires to copy—the girlish innocence and lovely sorrow of Juliet, Imogen, Perdita, or Viola—the enchanted solitude of Prospero and his daughter—the etherial loves and jealousies of Oberon and Titania, and those other magical scenes, all perfumed with love and poetry, and breathing the spirit of a celestial spring, which lie scattered in every part of his writings.—The genius of Fletcher, perhaps, is more akin to Mr. C.'s muse of imitation, than the soaring and "extravagant spirit" of Shakspeare; and we think we can trace, in more places than one, the impression which his fancy has received from the patient suffering and sweet desolation of Aspatia, in his Maid's tragedy. It is the youthful Milton only that he has presumed to copy—the Milton of Lycidas and Comus, and the Arcades, and the Seraphic Hymns—not the lofty and austere Milton of the Paradise. From Jonson, we think, he has imitated some of those exquisite songs and lyrical pieces that lie buried in the rubbish of his masks, and which continued to be the models for all such writings down to the period of the Restoration. There are no traces, we think, of Dryden, or Pope, or Young,—or of any body else, indeed, till we come down to Lord Byron, and our other tuneful contemporaries.—From what we have already said, it will be understood, that Mr. C. has not thought of imitating all Byron, any more than all Shakspeare. He leaves untouched the mockery and misanthropy, as well as much of the force and energy, of the noble Lord's poetry—and betakes himself only to its deep sense of beauty, and the grace and tenderness that are so often and so strangely interwoven with those less winning characteristics.—It is the poetry of Manfred, of Parisina, of Haidée and Thyrsa, that he aims at copying, and not

the higher and more energetic tone of the Corsair, or Childe Harold Don Juan. He has indeed borrowed the manner of this last piece in of the poems in this little volume—but has shown no great aptitude wit or sarcasm, and has succeeded only in the parts that are pathetic tender. There is a great deal of the diction of Wordsworth and Coleri and some imitation of their beauties: but we think the natural bent of genius is more like that of Leigh Hunt than any other author. He has same play of fancy, and the same capacity of deep and delicate feel together with the same relish for the old Italian poetry, and the plain simple pathos of Dante and Boccacio. We doubt, however, whether he equal force of original talent, or whether he could have written any thin good, on the whole, as the beautiful story of Rimini. But he has be taste and better judgment—or, what perhaps is but saying the same th he has less affectation, and far less conceit. He has scarcely any o affectation, indeed, than is almost necessarily implied in a sedulous imit of difficult models—and no visible conceit at all. On the contrary, cannot help supposing him to be a very natural and amiable person, has taken to write poetry, more for the love he bears it, than the fam which it may raise him—who cares nothing for the sects and factions which the poetical world may be divided;—but, regarding himself a debtor to every writer who has given him pleasure, desires nothing be than to range freely over the whole Parnassian garden, "stealing and gi odour" with a free spirit and a grateful and joyous heart.

It is this apparent devotion to the purer part of his art, and the total clusion of all contentious and dogmatical matter, that constitutes the g charm of his writing. The fever of party spirit, and the bitterness of s culative contention, have of late years infected all our literature; Poetry itself, instead of being the balm and anodyne of minds, hurt ruffled with the rugged tasks and angry struggles of the world, has too o been made the vehicle of moral and political animosity, religious antipa and personal offence. We cannot always, with all our philosophy, es the soil and tarnish of those contagious pursuits; but it is delightful to from them awhile, to the unalloyed sweets of such poetry as Mr. Cornwa and to refresh our fancies, and strengthen and compose our good affecti among the images of love and beauty, and gentle sympathy and sorrow, which it every where presents us.

* * * * * * *

If it be the peculiar province of Poetry to give delight, this author sh rank very high among our poets; and, in spite of his neglect of the ter passions, he *does* rank very high in our estimation. He has a beautiful fa and a beautiful diction—and a fine ear for the music of verse, and g tenderness and delicacy of feeling. He seems, moreover, to be altoge free from any tincture of bitterness, rancour, or jealousy; and never sh us with atrocity, or stiffens us with horror, or confounds us with the dr ful sublimities of demoniacal energy. His soul, on the contrary, se filled to overflowing with images of love and beauty, and gentle sorr and tender pity, and mild and holy resignation. The character of his po is to soothe, and melt, and delight: to make us kind, and thoughtful, imaginative—to purge away the dregs of our earthly passions, by the fining fires of a pure imagination, and to lap us up from the eating car life, in visions so soft and bright, as to sink like morning dreams on

ses, and at the same time so distinct and truly fashioned upon the eter- patterns of nature, as to hold their place before our eyes long after they ve again been opened on the dimmer scenes of the world.

Why this should not be thought the highest kind of poetry, we profess rselves rather at a loss to explain;—and certainly are ourselves often in mood to think that it is so; and to believe that the more tremendous tations of the breast, to which the art has so often been made sub- vient, have attracted more admiration, and engrossed more talent, than ght in justice to have been assigned them. The real lovers of poetry, we spect, will generally incline their ears most willingly to its softer and more nning strains—nor can we believe that it was for them that its more multuous measures were invented. Men of delicate sensibility and in- mmable imaginations do not require the stronger excitement of those isterous and agonising emotions, without which it may be difficult to use the sympathies of more tardy and rugged natures. The poetical mperament is intrinsically dreamy and contemplative; and subsists in ssionate imaginings, and beautiful presentments of the fancy. Wrath, d scorn, and misanthropy, are scarcely among its natural elements. It as but little legitimate affinity with horror and agony, and none at all with version and disgust; nor is it easy to conceive that it should very long naintain its attraction where the predominating feelings it excites are those f dread, astonishment, and disdain. Some strong and gloomy spirits there nay be, that really enjoy the stormy trouble of the elements; but the reater and the better part of the lovers of poetry will always be happy to scape to milder and more temperate regions, and to pursue their medita- ions among enchantments of a more engaging character, and forms of a gentler aspect.*

KEATS.†

We have been exceedingly struck with the genius which these volumes display, and the spirit of poetry which breathes through all their extravagance. That imitation of our older writers, and especially of our older dramatists, to which we cannot help flattering ourselves that we have somewhat contributed, has brought on, as it were, a second spring in our poetry;—and few of its blossoms are either more profuse of sweetness, or richer in promise, than this which is now before us. Mr. Keats, we understand, is still a very young man; and his whole works, indeed, bear evidence enough of the fact. They are full of extravagance and irregularity, rash attempts at originality, interminable wanderings, and excessive obscurity. They manifestly require, therefore, all the indulgence that can be claimed for a first attempt:—but we think it no less plain that they deserve it; for they are flushed all over with the rich lights of fancy, and so coloured and bestrewn with the flowers of poetry, that even while perplexed and bewildered in their labyrinths, it is impossible to resist the intoxication of their sweetness, or to shut our hearts to the enchantments they so lavishly pre-

* The concluding paragraph of this critique is taken from a review of Cornwall's "Marcian Colonna," Vol. xxxiv. p. 449.

† Endymion, and other Poems. By John Keats.—Vol. xxxiv. p. 203. August, 1820.

sent. The models upon which he has formed himself, in the E
the earliest and by much the most considerable of his poems, are
the Faithful Shepherdess of Fletcher, and the Sad Shepherd of Be
—the exquisite metres and inspired diction of which he has copied
boldness and fidelity,—and, like his great originals, has also co
impart to the whole piece that true rural and poetical air, which
only in them and in Theocritus,—which is at once homely and
luxurious and rude, and sets before us the genuine sights and sc
smells of the country, with all the magic and grace of Elysium. H
has the disadvantage of being mythological; and in this respect,
on account of the raised and rapturous tone it consequently ass
poetry may be better compared perhaps to the Comus and the A
Milton, of which also there are many traces of imitation. The
tinction, however, between him and these divine authors is, that
tion in them is subordinate to reason and judgment, while with
paramount and supreme;—that their ornaments and images are
to embellish and recommend just sentiments, engaging incidents, a
characters, while his are poured out without measure or restraint,
no apparent design but to unburden the breast of the author, and
to the overflowing vein of his fancy. The thin and scanty tissue o
is merely the light frame-work on which his florid wreaths are s
and while his imaginations go rambling and entangling themsel
where, like wild honeysuckles, all idea of sober reason, and plan,
sistency, is utterly forgotten, and are "strangled in their waste
A great part of the work, indeed, is written in the strangest and
tastical manner that can be imagined. It seems as if the author had
every thing that occurred to him in the shape of a glittering image
expression—taking the first word that presented itself to make up
and then made that word the germ of a new cluster of images—a
new excursion of the fancy—and so wandered on, equally forgetfu
he came, and heedless whither he was going, till he had covered
with an interminable arabesque of connected and incongruous fig
multiplied as they extended, and were only harmonised by the bri
their tints, and the graces of their forms. In this rash and headl
he has of course many lapses and failures. There is no work, acc
from which a malicious critic could cull more matter for ridicule,
more obscure, unnatural, or absurd passages. But we do not
to be our office;—and just beg leave, on the contrary, to say, tha
who, on this account, would represent the whole poem as despica
either have no notion of poetry, or no regard to truth.

It is, in truth, at least as full of genius as of absurdity; an
does not find a great deal in it to admire and to give delight, can
heart see much beauty in the two exquisite dramas to which
already alluded, or find any great pleasure in some of the finest
of Milton and Shakspeare. There are very many such persons,
believe, even among the reading and judicious part of the com
correct scholars, we have no doubt, many of them, and, it may
classical composers in prose and in verse—but utterly ignorant o
genius of English poetry, and incapable of estimating its appro
most exquisite beauties. With that spirit we have no hesitation
that Mr. Keats is deeply imbued—and of those beauties he has
us with many striking examples. We are very much inclined

add, that we do not know any book which we would sooner employ as a test to ascertain whether any one had in him a native relish for poetry, and a genuine sensibility to its intrinsic charm. The greater and more distinguished poets of our country have so much else in them to gratify other tastes and propensities, that they are pretty sure to captivate and amuse those to whom their poetry is but an hinderance and obstruction, as well as those to whom it constitutes their chief attraction. The interest of the stories they tell—the vivacity of the characters they delineate—the weight and force of the maxims and sentiments in which they abound—the very pathos and wit and humour they display, which may all and each of them exist apart from their poetry and independent of it, are quite sufficient to account for their popularity, without referring much to that still higher gift, by which they subdue to their enchantments those whose souls are attuned to the finer impulses of poetry. It is only where those other recommendations are wanting, or exist in a weaker degree, that the true force of the attraction, exercised by the pure poetry with which they are so often combined, can be fairly appreciated—where, without much incident or many characters, and with little wit, wisdom, or arrangement, a number of bright pictures are presented to the imagination, and a fine feeling expressed of those mysterious relations by which visible external things are assimilated with inward thoughts and emotions, and become the images and exponents of all passions and affections. To an unpoetical reader such passages always appear mere raving and absurdity—and to us censure a very great part of the volume before us will certainly be exposed, with this class of readers. Even in the judgment of a fitter audience, however, it must, we fear, be admitted, that, besides the riot and extravagance of his fancy, the scope and substance of Mr. Keats's story is rather too dreary and abstracted to excite the strongest interest, or to sustain the attention through a work of any great compass or extent. He deals too much with shadowy and incomprehensible beings, and is too constantly rapt into an extramundane Elysium, to command a lasting interest with ordinary mortals—and must employ the agency of more varied and coarser emotions, if he wishes to take rank with the seducing poets of this or of former generations. There is something very curious too, we think, in the way in which he, and Mr. Barry Cornwall also, have dealt with the Pagan mythology, of which they have made so much use in their poetry. Instead of presenting its imaginary persons under the trite and vulgar traits that belong to them in the ordinary systems, little more is borrowed from these than the general conception of their conditions and relations; and an original character and distinct individuality is bestowed upon them, which has all the merit of invention, and all the grace and attraction of the fictions on which it is engrafted. The ancients, though they probably did not stand in any great awe of their deities, have yet abstained very much from any minute or dramatic representation of their feelings and affections. In Hesiod and Homer, they are coarsely delineated by some of their actions and adventures, and introduced to us merely as the agents in those particular transactions; while in the Hymns, from those ascribed to Orpheus and Homer down to those of Callimachus, we have little but pompous epithets and invocations, with a flattering commemoration of their most famous exploits—and are never allowed to enter into their bosoms, or follow out the train of their feelings, with the presumption of our human sympathy. Except the love-song of the Cyclops to his Sea

Nymph, in Theocritus—the Lamentation of Venus for Adonis, in Moschus—and the more recent Legend of Apuleius, we scarcely recollect a passage in all the writings of antiquity in which the passions of an immortal are fairly disclosed to the scrutiny and observation of men. The author before us, however, and some of his contemporaries, have dealt differently with the subject;—and, sheltering the violence of the fiction under the ancient traditionary fable, have created and imagined an entire new set of characters, and brought closely and minutely before us the loves and sorrows and perplexities of beings, with whose names and supernatural attributes we had long been familiar, without any sense or feeling of their personal character. We have more than doubts of the fitness of such personages to maintain a permanent interest with the modern public;—but the way in which they are here managed certainly gives them the best chance that now remains for them; and, at all events, it cannot be denied that the effect is striking and graceful. Mr. Keats has unquestionably a very beautiful imagination, and a great familiarity with the finest diction of English poetry; but he must learn not to misuse or misapply these advantages,—and neither to waste the good gifts of nature and study on intractable themes, nor to luxuriate too recklessly on such as are more suitable.

SHELLEY.*

Mr. Shelley's style is to poetry what astrology is to natural science,—a passionate dream, a straining after impossibilities, a record of fond conjectures, a confused embodying of vague abstractions,—a fever of the soul, thirsting and craving after what it cannot have, indulging its love of power and novelty at the expense of truth and nature, associating ideas by contraries, and wasting great powers by their application to unattainable objects.

Poetry, we grant, creates a world of its own; but it creates it out of existing materials. Mr. Shelley is the maker of his own poetry—out of nothing. Not that he is deficient in the true sources of strength and beauty, if he had given himself fair play (the volume before us, as well as his other productions, contains many proofs to the contrary): but in him, fancy, will, caprice, predominated over and absorbed the natural influences of things; and he had no respect for any poetry that did not strain the intellect as well as fire the imagination—and was not sublimed into a high spirit of metaphysical philosophy. Instead of giving a language to thought, or lending the heart a tongue, he utters dark sayings, and deals in allegories and riddles. His Muse offers her services to clothe shadowy doubts and inscrutable difficulties in a robe of glittering words, and to turn nature into a brilliant paradox. We thank him—but we must be excused. Where we see the dazzling beacon lights streaming over the darkness of the abyss, we dread the quicksands and the rocks below. Mr. Shelley's mind was of "too fiery a quality" to repose (for any continuance) on the probable or the true—it soared "beyond the visible diurnal sphere," to the strange, the

* *Posthumous Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley.*—Vol. xl. p. 494. July, 1825.

ble, and the impossible. He mistook the nature of the poet's call-. ich should be guided by involuntary, not by voluntary, impulses. k off, as an heroic and praiseworthy act, the trammels of sense, and sympathy, and became the creature of his own will. He was ," disdaining the bars and ties of mortal mould. He ransacked his incongruities, and believed in whatever was incredible. Almost fort, almost all is extravagant, almost all is quaint, incomprehen- d abortive, from aiming to be more than it is. Epithets are because they do not fit; subjects are chosen, because they are ; the colours of his style, for their gaudy, changeful, startling semble the display of fire-works in the dark, and, like them, ther durability, nor keeping, nor discriminate form. Yet Mr. with all his faults, was a man of genius; and we lament that llable violence of temperament which gave it a forced and false . He has single thoughts of great depth and force, single images beauty, detached passages of extreme tenderness; and, in his ieces, where he has attempted little, he has done most. If some nd interesting idea touched his feelings or struck his fancy, he l it in pleasing and unaffected verse: but give him a larger subject, to reflect, and he was sure to get entangled in a system. The f vanity rolled volumes of smoke, mixed with sparkles of fire, cloudy tabernacle of his thought. The success of his writings ore in general in the inverse ratio of the extent of his under- inasmuch as his desire to teach, his ambition to excel, as soon as rought into play, encroached upon, and outstripped, his powers of n.

helley was a remarkable man. His person was a type and shadow nius. His complexion, fair, golden, freckled, seemed transparent inward light, and his spirit within him

> ——— "So divinely wrought,
> That you might almost say his body thought."

inded those who saw him of some of Ovid's fables. His form, and slender, drooped like a flower in the breeze. But he was beneath the weight of thought which he aspired to bear, and was l in the lightning-glare of a ruthless philosophy! He mistook the f his own faculties and feelings—the lowly children of the valley, by e skylark makes its bed, and the bee murmurs, for the proud cedar mountain-pine, in which the eagle builds its eyry, "and dallies wind, and scorns the sun." He wished to make of idle verse and se the frame-work of the universe, and to bind all possible existence sionary chain of intellectual beauty—

> "More subtle web Arachne cannot spin,
> Nor the fine nets, which oft we woven see
> Of scorch'd dew, do not in the air more lightly flee."

some lurking sense of his own deficiencies in the lofty walk which pted irritated his impatience and his desires; and urged him on, nged hopes, to atone for past failures, by more arduous efforts, and availing struggles.

all his faults, Mr. Shelley was an honest man. His unbelief and umption were parts of a disease, which was not combined in him *ith indifference to human* happiness, or contempt for human in-

firmities. There was neither selfishness nor malice at the bottom of his illusions. He was sincere in all his professions; and he practised what he preached—to his own sufficient cost. He followed up the letter and the spirit of his theoretical principles in his own person, and was ready to share both the benefit and the penalty with others. He thought and acted logically, and was what he professed to be—a sincere lover of truth, of nature, and of human kind. To all the rage of paradox he united an unaccountable candour and severity of reasoning: in spite of an aristocratic education, he retained in his manners the simplicity of a primitive apostle. An Epicurean in his sentiments, he lived with the frugality and abstemiousness of an ascetic. His fault was, that he had no deference for the opinions of others, too little sympathy with their feelings (which he thought he had a right to sacrifice, as well as his own, to a grand ethical experiment)—and trusted too implicitly to the light of his own mind, and to the warmth of his own impulses. He was indeed the most striking example we remember of the two extremes described by Lord Bacon as the great impediments to human improvement, the love of Novelty, and the love of Antiquity. "The first of these (impediments) is an extreme affection of two extremities, the one Antiquity, the other Novelty; wherein it seemeth the children of Time do take after the nature and malice of the father. For as he devoureth his children, so one of them seeketh to devour and suppress the other; while Antiquity envieth there should be new additions, and Novelty cannot be content to add, but it may deface. Surely the advice of the Prophet is the true direction in this matter: *Stand upon the old ways, and see which is the right and good way, and walk therein.* Antiquity deserveth that reverence, that men should make a stand thereupon, and discover what is the best way; but when the discovery is well taken, then to take progression. And to speak truly, *Antiquitas seculi Juventas mundi*. These times are the ancient times, when the world is ancient, and not those which we count ancient, *ordine retrogrado,* by a computation backwards from ourselves." (Advancement of Learning, Book I. p. 46.)—Such is the text; and Mr. Shelley's writings are a splendid commentary on one half of it. Considered in this point of view, his career may not be uninstructive even to those whom it most offended; and might be held up as a beacon and warning no less to the bigot than the sciolist. We wish to speak of the errors of a man of genius with tenderness. His nature was kind, and his sentiments noble; but in him the rage of free enquiry and private judgment amounted to a species of madness. Whatever was new, untried, unheard of, unauthorised, exerted a kind of fascination over his mind. The examples of the world, the opinion of others, instead of acting as a check upon him, served but to impel him forward with double velocity in his wild and hazardous career. Spurning the world of realities, he rushed into the world of nonentities and contingencies, like air into a *vacuum*. If a thing was old and established, this was with him a certain proof of its having no solid foundation to rest upon; if it was new, it was good and right. Every paradox was to him a self-evident truth; every prejudice an undoubted absurdity. The weight of authority, the sanction of ages, the common consent of mankind, were vouchers only for ignorance, error, and imposture. Whatever shocked the feelings of others, conciliated his regard; whatever was light, extravagant, and vain, was to him a proportionable relief from the dulness and stupidity of established opinions. The worst of it however was, that he thus gave great encouragement to those who believe

in all received absurdities, and are wedded to all existing abuses; his extravagance seeming to sanction their grossness and selfishness, as theirs were a full justification of his folly and eccentricity. The two extremes in this way often meet, jostle, and confirm one another. The infirmities of age are a foil to the presumption of youth; and "there the antics sit," mocking one another—the ape Sophistry pointing with reckless scorn at "palsied eld," and the bed-rid hag, Legitimacy, rattling her chains, counting her beads, dipping her hands in blood, and blessing herself from all change and from every appeal to common sense and reason! Opinion thus alternates in a round of contradictions: the impatience or obstinacy of the human mind takes part with, and flies off to one or other of the two extremes "of affection," and leaves a horrid gap, a blank sense and feeling in the middle, which seems never likely to be filled up, without a total change in our mode of proceeding. The martello-towers with which we are to repress, if we cannot destroy, the systems of fraud and oppression, should not be castles in the air, or clouds in the verge of the horizon, but the enormous and accumulated pile of abuses which have arisen out of their own continuance. The principles of sound morality, liberty, and humanity, are not to be found only in a few recent writers, who have discovered the secret of the greatest happiness to the greatest numbers, but are truths as old as the creation. To be convinced of the existence of wrong, we should read history rather than poetry: the levers with which we must work out our regeneration are not the cobwebs of the brain, but the warm, palpitating fibres of the human heart. It is the collision of passions and interests, the petulance of party-spirit, and the perversities of self-will and self-opinion, that have been the great obstacles to social improvement—not stupidity or ignorance; and the caricaturing one side of the question and shocking the most pardonable prejudices on the other, is not the way to allay heats or produce unanimity. By flying to the extremes of scepticism, we make others shrink back, and shut themselves up in the strongholds of bigotry and superstition;—by mixing up doubtful or offensive matters with salutary and demonstrable truths, we bring the whole into question, fly-blow the cause, risk the principle, and give a handle and a pretext to the enemy to treat all philosophy and all reform as a compost of crude, chaotic, and monstrous absurdities. We thus arm the virtues as well as the vices of the community against us; we trifle with their understandings, and exasperate their self-love; we give to superstition and injustice all their old security and sanctity, as if they were the only alternatives of impiety and profligacy, and league the natural with the selfish prejudices of mankind in hostile array against us. To this consummation, it must be confessed that too many of Mr. Shelley's productions pointedly tend. He makes no account of the opinions of others, or the consequences of any of his own; but proceeds—tasking his reason to the utmost to account for every thing, and discarding every thing as mystery and error for which he cannot account by an effort of mere intelligence—measuring man, providence, nature, and even his own heart, by the limits of the understanding—now hallowing high mysteries, now desecrating pure sentiments, according as they fall in with or exceed those limits; and exalting and purifying, with Promethean heat, whatever he does not confound and debase.

Mr. Shelley died, it seems, with a volume of Mr. Keats's poetry grasped with one hand in his bosom! These are two out of four poets, patriots and friends, who have visited Italy within a few years, both of whom have been

soon hurried to a more distant shore. Keats died young; and "yet his infelicity had years too many." A canker had blighted the tender bloom that o'erspread a face in which youth and genius strove with beauty. The shaft was sped—venal, vulgar, venomous, that drove him from his country, with sickness and penury for companions, and followed him to his grave. And yet there are those who could trample on the faded flower—men to whom breaking hearts are a subject of merriment—who laugh loud over the silent urn of Genius, and play out their game of venality and infamy with the crumbling bones of their victims! To this band of immortals a third has since been added!—a mightier genius, a haughtier spirit, whose stubborn impatience and Achilles-like pride only Death could quell. Greece, Italy, the world, have lost their poet-hero; and his death has spread a wider gloom, and been recorded with a deeper awe, than has waited on the obsequies of any of the many great who have died in our remembrance. Even detraction has been silent at his tomb; and the more generous of his enemies have fallen into the rank of his mourners. But he set like the sun in his glory; and his orb was greatest and brightest at the last, for his memory is now consecrated no less by freedom than genius. He probably fell a martyr to his zeal against tyrants. He attached himself to the cause of Greece, and dying, clung to it with a convulsive grasp, and has thus gained a niche in her history; for whatever *she* claims as hers is immortal, even in decay, as the marble sculptures on the columns of her fallen temples!

MRS. HEMANS.*

Women, we fear, cannot do every thing; nor even every thing they attempt. But what they can do, they do, for the most part, excellently—and much more frequently with an absolute and perfect success, than the aspirants of our rougher and more ambitious sex. They cannot, we think, represent naturally the fierce and sullen passions of men—nor their coarser vices—nor even scenes of actual business or contention—and the mixed motives, and strong and faulty characters, by which affairs of moment are usually conducted on the great theatre of the world. For much of this they are disqualified by the delicacy of their training and habits, and the still more disabling delicacy which pervades their conceptions and feelings; and from much they are excluded by their actual inexperience of the realities they might wish to describe—by their substantial and incurable ignorance of business—of the way in which serious affairs are actually managed—and the true nature of the agents and impulses that give movement and direction to the stronger currents of ordinary life. Perhaps they are also incapable of long moral or political investigations, where many complex and indeterminate elements are to be taken into account, and a variety of opposite probabilities to be weighed before coming to a conclusion. They are generally too impatient to get at the ultimate results, to go well through with such discussions; and either stop short at some imperfect view of the truth, or turn aside to repose in the shadow of some plausible error. This, however, we are persuaded, arises entirely from their being seldom set on

* *Records of Woman*; the Forest Sanctuary, and other Poems. By Felicia Hemans.—Vol. I. *p. 32. October, 1829.*

such tedious tasks. Their proper and natural business is the practical regulation of private life, in all its bearings, affections, and concerns; and the questions with which they have to deal in that most important department, though often of the utmost difficulty and nicety, involve, for the most part, but few elements; and may generally be better described as delicate than intricate;—requiring for their solution rather a quick tact and fine perception than a patient or laborious examination. For the same reason they rarely succeed in long works, even on subjects the best suited to their genius; their natural training rendering them equally averse to long doubt and long labour.

For all other intellectual efforts, however, either of the understanding or the fancy, and requiring a thorough knowledge either of man's strength or his weakness, we apprehend them to be, in all respects, as well qualified as their brethren of the stronger sex; while, in their perceptions of grace, propriety, ridicule—their power of detecting artifice, hypocrisy, and affectation—the force and promptitude of their sympathy, and their capacity of noble and devoted attachment, and of the efforts and sacrifices it may require, they are, beyond all doubt, our superiors.

Their business being, as we have said, with actual or social life, and the colours it receives from the conduct and dispositions of individuals, they unconsciously acquire, at a very early age, the finest perception of character and manners, and are almost as soon instinctively schooled in the deep and dangerous learning of feeling and emotion; while the very minuteness with which they make and meditate on these interesting observations, and the finer shades and variations of sentiment which are thus treasured and recorded, trains their whole faculties to a nicety and precision of operation, which often discloses itself to advantage in their application to studies of a very different character. When women, accordingly, have turned their minds—as they have done but too seldom—to the exposition or arrangement of any branch of knowledge, they have commonly exhibited, we think, a more beautiful accuracy, and a more uniform and complete justness of thinking, than their less discriminating brethren. There is a finish and completeness about every thing they put out of their hands, which indicates not only an inherent taste for elegance and neatness, but a habit of nice observation, and singular exactness of judgment.

It has been so little the fashion, at any time, to encourage women to write for publication, that it is more difficult than it should be, to prove these truths by examples. Yet there are enough, within the reach of a very careless and superficial glance over the open field of literature, to enable us to explain, at least, and illustrate, if not entirely to verify, our assertions. No *man*, we will venture to say, could have written the Letters of Madame de Sévigné, or the Novels of Miss Austin, or the Hymns and Early Lessons of Mrs. Barbauld, or the Conversations of Mrs. Marcet. These performances, too, are not only essentially and intensely feminine, but they are, in our judgment, decidedly more perfect than any masculine productions with which they can be brought into comparison. They accomplish more completely all the ends at which they aim, and are worked out with a gracefulness and felicity of execution, which excludes all idea of failure, and entirely satisfies the expectations they may have raised. We might easily have added to these instances. There are many parts of Miss Edgeworth's earlier stories, and of Miss Mitford's sketches and descriptions, and not a little of Mrs. Opie's, that exhibit the same fine and penetrating spirit of ob-

servation, the same softness and delicacy of hand, and unerring truth of delineation, to which we have alluded as characterising the purer specimens of female art. The same distinguishing traits of a woman's spirit are visible through the grief and the piety of Lady Russel, and the gaiety, the spite, and the venturesomeness of Lady Mary Wortley. We have not as yet much female poetry; but there is a truly feminine tenderness, purity, and elegance, in the Psyche of Mrs. Tighe, and in some of the smaller pieces of Lady Craven. On some of the works of Madame de Staël—her Corinne especially—there is a still deeper stamp of the genius of her sex. Her pictures of its boundless devotedness—its depth and capacity of suffering—its high aspirations—its painful irritability, and inextinguishable thirst for emotion, are powerful specimens of that morbid anatomy of the heart, which no hand but that of a woman's was fine enough to have laid open, or skilful enough to have recommended to our sympathy and love. There is the same exquisite and inimitable delicacy, if not the same power, in many of the happier passages of Madame de Souza and Madame Cottin—to say nothing of the more lively and yet melancholy records of Madame de Staël, during her long penance in the court of the Duchesse de Maine.

But we are preluding too largely; and must come at once to the point to which the very heading of this article has already admonished the most careless of our readers that we are tending. We think the poetry of Mrs. Hemans a fine exemplification of Female Poetry—and we think it has much of the perfection which we have ventured to ascribe to the happier productions of female genius.

It may not be the best imaginable poetry, and may not indicate the very highest or most commanding genius; but it embraces a great deal of that which gives the very best poetry its chief power of pleasing; and would strike us, perhaps, as more impassioned and exalted, if it were not regulated and harmonised by the most beautiful taste. It is infinitely sweet, elegant, and tender—touching, perhaps, and contemplative, rather than vehement and overpowering; and not only finished throughout with an exquisite delicacy, and even serenity of execution, but informed with a purity and loftiness of feeling, and a certain sober and humble tone of indulgence and piety, which must satisfy all judgments, and allay the apprehensions of those who are most afraid of the passionate exaggerations of poetry. The diction is always beautiful, harmonious, and free—and the themes, though of infinite variety, uniformly treated with a grace, originality, and judgment, which mark the same master hand. These themes she has borrowed, with the peculiar interest and imagery that belong to them, from the legends of different nations, and the most opposite states of society; and has contrived to retain much of what is interesting and peculiar in each of them, without adopting, along with it, any of the revolting or extravagant excesses which may characterise the taste or manners of the people or the age from which it has been derived. She has thus transfused into her German or Scandinavian legends the imaginative and daring tones of the originals, without the mystical exaggerations of the one, or the painful fierceness and coarseness of the other; she has preserved the clearness and elegance of the French, without their coldness or affectation; and the tenderness and simplicity of the early Italians, without their diffuseness or languor. Though occasionally expatiating, somewhat fondly and at large, amongst the sweets of her own planting, there is, on the whole, a great *condensation and* brevity in most of her pieces, and, almost without excep-

ion, a most judicious and vigorous conclusion. The great merit, however, of her poetry, is undoubtedly in its tenderness and its beautiful imagery. The first requires no explanation; but we must be allowed to add a word as to the peculiar charm and character of the latter.

It has always been our opinion, that the very essence of poetry, apart from the pathos, the wit, or the brilliant description, which may be embodied in it, but may exist equally in prose, consists in the fine perception and vivid expression of that subtle and mysterious analogy which exists between the physical and the moral world—which makes outward things and qualities the natural types and emblems of inward gifts and emotions, and leads us to ascribe life and sentiment to every thing that interests us in the aspects of external nature. The feeling of this analogy, obscure and inexplicable as the theory of it may be, is so deep and universal in our nature, that it has stamped itself on the ordinary language of men of every kindred and speech: and that to such an extent, that one half of the epithets by which we familiarly designate moral and physical qualities, are in reality so many metaphors, borrowed reciprocally, upon this analogy, from those opposite forms of existence. The very familiarity, however, of the expression, in these instances, takes away its poetical effect—and indeed, in substance, its metaphorical character. The original sense of the word is entirely forgotten in the derivative one to which it has succeeded; and it requires some etymological recollection to convince us that it was originally nothing else than a typical or analogical illustration. Thus, we talk of a penetrating understanding, and a furious blast—a weighty argument, and a gentle stream—without being at all aware that we are speaking in the language of poetry, and transferring qualities from one extremity of the sphere of being to another. In these cases, accordingly, the metaphor, by ceasing to be felt, in reality ceases to exist; and the analogy, being no longer intimated, of course can produce no effect. But whenever it is intimated, it does produce an effect; and that effect, we think, is poetry.

It has substantially two functions, and operates in two directions. In the *first* place, it strikes vividly out, and flashes at once on our minds, the conception of an inward feeling or emotion, which it might otherwise have been difficult to convey, by the presentment of some bodily form or quality, which is instantly felt to be its true representative, and enables us to fix and comprehend it with a force and clearness not otherwise attainable; and, in the *second* place, it vivifies dead and inanimate matter with the attributes of living and sentient mind, and fills the whole visible universe around us with objects of interest and sympathy, by tinging them with the hues of life, and associating them with our own passions and affections. This magical operation the poet too performs, for the most part, in one of two ways, —either by the direct agency of similes and metaphors more or less condensed or developed, or by the mere graceful presentment of such visible objects on the scene of his passionate dialogues or adventures, as partake of the character of the emotion he wishes to excite, and thus form an appropriate accompaniment or preparation for its direct indulgence or display. The former of those methods has, perhaps, been most frequently employed, and certainly has most attracted attention. But the latter, though less obvious, and perhaps less frequently resorted to of set purpose, is, we are inclined to think, the most natural and efficacious of the two; and is often adopted, we believe, unconsciously, by poets of the highest order;—the preeminant emotion of their minds overflowing spontaneously on all the ob-

jects which present themselves to their fancy, and calling out from them, and colouring with its own hues, those that are naturally emblematic of its character, and in accordance with its general expression. It would be easy to show how habitually this is done by Shakspeare, and Milton especially, and how much many of their finest passages are indebted both for force and richness of effect to this general and diffusive harmony of the external character of their scenes with the passions of their living agents—this harmonising and appropriate glow with which they kindle the whole surrounding atmosphere, and bring all that strikes the sense into unison with all that touches the heart.

But it is more to our present purpose to say, that we think the fair writer before us is eminently a mistress of this poetical secret; and, in truth, it was solely for the purpose of illustrating this great charm and excellence in her imagery, that we have ventured upon this little dissertation. Almost all her poems are rich with fine descriptions, and studded over with images of visible beauty. But these are never idle ornaments. All her pomps have a meaning; and her flowers and her gems are arranged, as they are said to be among Eastern lovers, so as to speak the language of truth and passion. This is peculiarly remarkable in some little pieces, which seem at first sight to be purely descriptive—but are soon found to tell upon the heart, with a deep moral and pathetic impression. But it is a truth nearly as conspicuous in the greater part of her productions; where we scarcely meet with any striking sentiment that is not ushered in by some such symphony of external nature, and scarcely a lovely picture that does not serve as a foreground to some deep or lofty emotion.

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We have seen too much of the perishable nature of modern literary fame, to venture to predict to Mrs. Hemans that hers will be immortal, or even of very long duration. Since the beginning of our critical career, we have seen a vast deal of beautiful poetry pass into oblivion, in spite of our feeble efforts to recall or retain it in remembrance. The tuneful quartos of Southey are already little better than lumber; and the rich melodies of Keats and Shelley, and the fantastical emphasis of Wordsworth, and the plebeian pathos of Crabbe, are melting fast from the fields of our vision. The novels of Scott have put out his poetry. Even the splendid strains of Moore are fading into distance and dimness, except where they have been married to immortal music; and the blazing star of Byron himself is receding from its place of pride. We need say nothing of Milman, and Croly, and Atherstone, and Hood, and a legion of others, who, with no ordinary gifts of taste and fancy, have not so properly survived their fame, as been excluded by some hard fatality from what seemed their just inheritance. The two who have the longest withstood this rapid withering of the laurel, and with the least marks of decay on their branches, are Rogers and Campbell; neither of them, it may be remarked, voluminous writers, and both distinguished rather for the fine taste and consummate elegance of their writings, than for that fiery passion, and disdainful vehemence, which seemed for a time to be so much more in favour with the public.

If taste and elegance, however, be titles to enduring fame, we might venture securely to promise that rich boon to the author before us; who adds to those great merits a tenderness and loftiness of feeling, and an ethereal *purity* of sentiment, which could only emanate from the soul of a woman. *She must beware* of becoming too voluminous; and must not venture again

on any thing so long as the "Forest Sanctuary." But, if the next generation inherit our taste for short poems, we are persuaded it will not readily allow her to be forgotten. For we do not hesitate to say, that she is, beyond all comparison, the most touching and accomplished writer of occasional verses that our literature has yet to boast of.

SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE AND MR. MARTIN.*

Though the productions of the pencil do not form immediate objects of our peculiar jurisdiction, they are indirectly and unavoidably brought within the sphere of its judgments by means of the critical discussions to which they give rise. We cannot decide upon the principles by which the merits of a picture, or of a master, are tried, without the privilege of referring to our own perceptions of pictorial beauty. What is depicted on the canvass is necessarily brought under our review by what is impressed on the page; and, when criticism is, on all sides, busy with the works of a living master, we are in some measure called to examine them, that we may be able to determine as to the skill and fairness of the strictures we peruse. It will not, therefore, we hope, be thought that we have either unwittingly or improperly wandered from our legitimate province, in availing ourselves of the appearance of a publication on British Artists, to make a few remarks on the works of one of the class, every where talked of and criticised—the distinguished painter of *Belshazzar's Feast*.

The interest excited in the British public by this and others of Mr. Martin's works, is such, we believe, as never before was awakened by those of any other painter. It is true that, by a certain class of critics, he has been charged with many and considerable faults; but, though we should admit the justness of their censures, it must be evident that, for the production of an admiration so enthusiastic in the greater number, including many equally competent to judge aright, he must be allowed the possession of excellences of a very high, if not indeed of the highest class. The causes of those varying and opposite judgments and feelings present an interesting field of critical enquiry; and in order that we may obtain a clearer view of [illegible], and of the peculiar merits of Mr. Martin, we shall attempt a sort of parallel between them and those of a contemporary of unmingled popularity, but of a very different class,—the President of the Royal Academy. In [illegible], we shall discuss the nature of those claims to our admiration presented by the pieces of the latter, and show why all admire and none censure them; and shall then try to explain how it is that some but faintly approve, or decidedly condemn, the works of the former, while others fearlessly rate them among the very highest of the productions of genius.

To what sentiments, then,—to what faculties,—do the portraitures of Sir [illegible]. Lawrence appeal? and by what laws are their merits estimated? The reader will shew that most of the sentiments they awaken are such as exist in the bosom of almost every man.

It may, perhaps, be with truth asserted, that no human creature in a sound state, mental and corporeal, ever existed, who was quite unsusceptible

* Lives of the most eminent British Painters, Sculptors, and Architects.—Vol. xlix. p. 459. [illegible], 1829.

of that pleasure which arises from the sight of a clever imitation. The exclamation of a clown, on beholding the pictured face of any person familiarly known to him, will immediately attest the pleasure which he receives from the deception; the most experienced critic will also derive satisfaction from the *look of life* which a skilful painter can infuse into his works. The nearer imitation approaches to the appearance of reality, the greater is the pleasure excited by it. The colossal portrait, or the miniature, of one's friend, can never be taken for the living person; but, under certain favouring circumstances, a picture of the just dimensions may, for a moment, cheat the eye; and this advantage, as far as it is worth, the President possesses in representing his figures nearly of the natural size. Here, then, is one appeal extending to every beholder.

Again, there is a considerable class to whom the representations of genteel life are pleasing; and Sir T. Lawrence unquestionably gives to his subjects the look of gentlemen and of gentlewomen, in a style superior to that of any other existing painter.

Others, in addition to the pleasure derived from these two sources, feel great delight from delineations of female beauty; and nowhere can more exquisite specimens be found than in the portraitures under consideration.

A fourth class will experience an intense satisfaction from the display of a perfect command of pencil—from the impress of the character of the painter upon his canvass; and in Sir T. Lawrence's *touch* they will find elegance, and tenderness, and gentle power. This class comprehends the superior artists, and, perhaps, but a few of the critics and amateurs; but the influence of their opinions is extensive.

Another class of artists and sound critics may be sensible of high delight from the evidences of that faculty, not a very common one, which enables a painter to impart to his works the charm of *fine colouring;* and in this department of his art, Sir T. Lawrence is not defective, though he is assuredly inferior to some other living painters.

Lastly, a yet smaller class, but consisting generally of persons of cultivated minds, and who exercise a considerable influence upon the opinions of others, find pleasure from beholding forcibly imprinted upon the countenance, nay, upon every attitude,—even upon the very drapery,—the character, the predominant feeling, of the individual depicted;—the somewhat breathing, as it were, from the soul, upon every thing within its influence: and in this respect also, as far as his subjects allow, is Sir T. Lawrence eminently successful. His Lords are prodigiously lordly;—his senators are the very men, in their best looks, whom we see in the two Houses;—shrewd, sagacious, and reflecting,—conscious of power and privilege; and never doubting the result of the next election. Is it to be wondered at, that, with just claims upon the admiration of so many classes, this elegant artist should be so popular? There is much in his pictures that is delightful, and nothing that can displease. He makes no demand upon our imaginations with which they are unable to comply. With him we are in a pleasant valley, beside a quiet stream, and the Naiades and the Dryades around us are all the most polished ladies and gentlemen. He does not place us on the brink of some grand but tremendous precipice, and make our weak brains whirl with giddiness as we look down; if he takes us on an excursion of pleasure, it *is in a soft-rolling* coach-and-four, accompanied with lords and titled dames. *His lakes* are always in sunshine, and gently curled by a spring breeze, —*and his rivers* are at no season of the year flooded to torrents. But there

re feelings in the human heart, which a painter may awaken, far nobler nd more stirring than those produced by such objects—and upon these he ever calls. He is an elegant copyist of the nature which is before him,—frequently an improver upon the individual subjects whom he represents, —but he has nothing of the divine faculty that can make the painter's, as he poet's eye,

" Glance from earth to heaven,—from heaven to earth."

The most unquestionable evidence of a superior mind,—a mind whose wer resides within itself, and is not borrowed merely, or reflected from hers,—is the manifestation of that faculty which has been named *Inven-n*. Clever men have ingeniously imitated the manner of great exemplars; t to produce that which has no prototype, and which other men will be oud to imitate, is to create: and this is the exertion of the rarest, if not noblest power of the human intellect. It need scarcely be said that such ginality as consists in mere oddness, or caprice, or affectation, cannot admitted as *invention*,—which deserves the name only when it pro-ces that which is at once new, beautiful, great, and surprising.

The possession of this high faculty we claim for Mr. Martin, almost thout a doubt of universal concurrence. If his subjects are not all such were never before attempted, they are unquestionably treated in a manner tally different from that of any preceding master. The late venerable esident of the Royal Academy was among the first to perceive the strik-g originality of the young artist's genius, and, with a generous frankness, predict the splendour of his career. It may safely be said, that nothing Mr. Martin's works reminds us of the manner of any earlier artist. His rength is his own, as well as his weakness. He has not caught his light y reflection from any other glory; neither is he dark, in imitation of any her greatness obscured. His subjects and manner bespeak original power nd native impulses. The mechanical processes by which his pencil pro-uces its mimicry of form and texture, appear to resemble those of no other ainter. His earth, his skies, his foliage, his draperies, his architecture, ave attributes all their own. It cannot be necessary to say more upon a oint which will probably not be disputed; we shall, therefore, proceed to nake a brief estimate of the qualities by which Mr. Martin has attained a eputation so well deserved; endeavouring, at the same time, to indicate he reasons why his pictures are still, to certain persons, uninteresting, or erhaps disagreeable.

The qualities which we have ventured to assign as the causes of Sir Thomas Lawrence's wide popularity we shall shortly recapitulate, because we design to show, that accomplishments which, to a man of mere talent, how exquisite soever, are absolutely essential to his very name as an artist, may, to a man of high genius, be almost unimportant.

From the first, and universally admitted charm of successful imitation, Mr. Martin derives little or no aid. His pictures are never deceptions; they are representations—sometimes mere indications—of things: a dot stands sometimes for a man, and a square patch will intimate to us a mighty city.

With the second charm in the works of the President, that which pleases by the representation of genteel life, Mr. Martin has nothing to do. To subjects like his, *the genteel life* of any one country or age are but as the

hues upon a bubble which bursts while you look upon it. His men and women are not the men and women of London, or of England or of Europe, or of the nineteenth century. They are such as from the creation have existed, and to the end of time shall exist.

The President's third, and most potent spell, affords to Mr. Martin no aid; for in the representation of beauty—the beauty, at least, of the human countenance—he has not hitherto succeeded. We are not without hope, justified, as we think, by the decisive improvement visible in the figures, generally, of his last great picture, that he may even yet add this attraction to his many others; but we speak now of that which he has done; and must hold that no part of his success has arisen from his power of portraying female beauty.

But neither to the fourth charm which we have assigned to the President, can we trace much of Mr. Martin's reputation,—that perfect command of pencil, namely, which gives the impress of the character of the painter upon his canvass. Mr. Martin's *touch* has not always the character of himself, or of his subjects; and the class of critics who alone can estimate this excellence properly, are not uniformly satisfied with it. His own mind, estimated by his works, should be bold, enthusiastic, and imaginative; but his *handling* does not always express this character. On the contrary, there is sometimes a tameness and littleness in his touch, quite inconsistent with the daring magnificence of his conceptions; an air of careful *neatness*,—as though his work were executed with a small brush, and a cautious hand. That no hand is, in truth, more bold and self-relying, we know from undoubted authority; but we are speaking of that which *appears* upon his works, and from which alone the general spectator can draw his inferences.

It must be admitted, that this almost feeble neatness may be the consequence of the frequent minuteness of his objects, which require to be painted with care, but which, from their number, and their comparative unimportance in the grandeur of the scene, cannot be finished with that last exquisite polish which, in many pictures that have no other claim whatever, excites an almost universal admiration. We have seen specimens of high finishing upon trifling objects from the pencil of Mr. Martin, and cannot doubt that, if he were to stoop his wing, and work upon the ground at *Still Life* with those who never soar above it, he might successfully compete with many an illustrious Dutchman. In such parts of his pictures as permit the free scope of hand, Mr. Martin manifests a touch of perfect dominion over his canvass. Witness his mountains piled to the sky,—his foliage occasionally,—his inimitable clouds. But whatever may be his real merit or demerit in respect to his *handling*, it must, we think, be conceded, that in analysing the delight which we feel on beholding his paintings, we are not sensible that much, if any, of our pleasure is owing to that impress of the feelings of the painter upon his canvass, which we have noted as one of the causes of the general popularity of Sir Thomas Lawrence.

The fifth of those causes, which, however, we considered as less conducing to the President's success,—the charm, namely, of fine colouring,—we must perhaps consider to be also as little effective to Mr. Martin. He is, in truth, most unequal in this regard; for no colouring can well be worse than almost all his flesh-colouring,—the most difficult of all, and in some *works, but not* in his, the most important;—while the colouring of other *parts of his paintings* is truly admirable and unexcelled. We must not stop

nt out instances; but shall venture to hold, that of those who admire orks, there are but a few who attribute much of their pleasure to his ior colouring.

ith regard to the last quality, that, namely, of forcibly imprinting upon man countenance,—upon every limb and attitude, nay upon the very ry itself,—the moving passion of the individual depicted, we must , in the case of Mr. Martin, pronounce a chequered opinion. It has the practice of some to hold his figures as matter for a charitable in- nce;—as so much given into the bargain with the gorgeous architec- —as things avowedly placed there, merely to show where, as being ial to the making-out of the scene, the painter would intimate to us ıen and women ought to be. But this opinion we consider to be er- us; and we believe that the public generally, since the exhibition of *all of Nineveh*, are convinced, that, in this regard, justice had not lone to the painter. We are ourselves disposed to rank him as at once g the feeblest, and the most powerful, masters of *expression*. In at- ing to mark in the countenance the workings at the heart, he rarely, r, succeeds. His genius is essentially Epic, and not Dramatic: he can with Homer, or with Milton, in presenting a great event, with all its ificent concurrents—the confusion and rage of battle—physical sub- , darkness and tempest; but he can do nothing with Shakspeare, in dying the passion of Love, or the fine philosophy and solemn musings mlet. We scarcely recollect to have heard any face from his pencil d out as admirable for the force and propriety of its expression, with ception of that of Sardanapalus in the *Fall of Nineveh*; and with this r our own parts, never could feel satisfied.

far, then, as he is to be viewed in this comparison with the President Academy, we must say, that in the faculty of depicting the varied ex- on of the human face, which, though assuredly in a walk far humbler ss difficult, so much contributes to the success of that gentleman, Mr. n has hitherto not been successful: and we shall thus find that, of the complishments which we have ventured to assign as mainly contri- g to that elegant painter's popularity, there is not one which we dare, *igh degree*, to attribute to Mr. Martin. Yet he is confessedly a great er. Glaringly deficient in any one of these qualities, Sir Thomas t have still been a successful painter of faces, but he would never have sent for to the congress of kings;—proud lords and dames would never deemed themselves as much honoured as honouring in placing them- s beside his easel;—and he would probably never have taken his seat e chair of the Academy. But, not very eminent in any of these qua- , and by others totally unassisted, Mr. Martin has elevated himself to ery highest station among painters. By what powers he has so raised elf, let us now enquire.

hat which chiefly distinguishes Mr. Martin from other artists, is his r of depicting the Vast,—the Magnificent,—the Terrible,—the Brilliant, e Obscure,—the Supernatural,—and, sometimes, the Beautiful. These great and noble elements, and are often used by him with a masterly l. As contrasted with those excited by the exquisite works of the Pre- nt, to what different sentiments do they not address themselves! In king to them, we find ourselves suddenly in a new state of existence. painter has ever, like Martin, represented the immensity of space—none him made *architecture so* sublime, merely through its vastness: no

painter, like him, has spread forth the boundless valley, or piled mountain upon mountain to the sky—like him has none made light pour down in dazzling floods from heaven; and none has like him painted the "darkness visible" of the infernal deeps.

With our feelings warmed, and our imaginations expanded, by such subjects, we are comparatively indifferent to the mechanical means by which they are effected. If his flesh-colouring is not so rich as that of Etty,—if the drawing of his figures is not so correct as that of Lawrence,—if his touch is not so tender as that of Claude, or so free as that of Salvator,—we can excuse it, because he excites in us emotions of a nature far nobler than those with which we contemplate the utmost perfection of mechanical skill.

It is not that fine colouring, and correct drawing, and the other accomplishments of a painter, are unimportant in even the most ideal and sublime of his works; but that, as estimated with their value in humbler subjects, they are *comparatively* so. What would Wilkie be with Martin's indifferent power of individual expression? or Etty, with no more than Martin's skill in flesh-colouring? or Lawrence, with as much imperfection in the drawing of the human figure? But if, to his higher powers of imagination, Martin could bring the full aid of these accomplishments, assuredly he would, to an incalculable degree, increase the merit of his pictures as works of art, and their effect upon every spectator, and, as a necessary result, his own already high reputation. That their colouring and pencilling contribute little towards the stirring effect of his pictures, is sufficiently proved by the undiminished, if not indeed *increased*, power of his designs, when reduced to the mere black and white of mezzotinto prints. The emanations of mind seem to come upon us with a severer grandeur from being more divested of mechanical adjuncts. The spirit of the conception appears to have cast off a portion of the clay by which it must be rendered visible to a material eye.

Mr. Martin's admitted peculiarity of pencilling has been to some persons so offensive, that they have laughed at the ignorance of his admirers. Yet those very objectors have been loud in their praises of his engravings. But the chief matter,—all that stirs great emotions within us,—is nearly the same in the picture which they revile, and in the print which they admire; and they thus tacitly acknowledge that they have attended more to some mere imperfection of the *setting*, than to the precious jewel which it bound in.

But if we feel compelled to admit Mr. Martin's mediocrity in much of that which is almost entirely mechanical in his art, there is one power that, in a free sense, may be also called mechanical, which, by the confession, we believe, of all, he possesses in a degree superior to any painter, living or dead—the great and unprecedented skill which he has shown in his management of the laws of perspective. That these laws are to be learned without difficulty by any common understanding, is not unfrequently the remark of men who have themselves shown their ignorance of them. These persons desire to insinuate, that effects produced by the application of simple mathematical laws, must have in them something of a mechanical nature which is unworthy the attention, or the use, of a man of genius; —that such effects are, in truth, a sort of *trickery* in art; and, far from being worthy of admiration for their difficulty or their rarity, are to be *accomplished* easily by any man who thinks the attempt worth his while, *and not derogatory* to the dignity of his genius. It may be sufficient, in

answer to this, to say, that the laws of perspective do not furnish Mr. Martin with his magnificent conceptions; they do not create his mountains, and his far-stretching plains,—his grand array of battle,—his "cloud-capped towers and gorgeous palaces:" these must first exist in the mind of the painter; and the laws of perspective are merely the means by which he realises them to the eyes of others.

There is in the works of this artist a singular mingling of the great with the minute,—of vastness in the whole, and infinite multiplicity in the parts. This has been objected to; and it has been said that he has no unity,—that he paints a hundred pictures in one. But minuteness of detail is, then, only inconsistent with grandeur, when the details are not in accordance with the pervading spirit of the whole; when they manifest in the artist a *littleness* of conception,—a poor ambition after trivial attainment;—when they tend to distract attention from what ought to be the absorbing interest,—when they seem to be thrust in without a reason, and without propriety;—when they appear to have been introduced, not from any natural and obvious suggestion of the subject, but from some caprice, or wrong-headed notion of the artist;—when they imply a taste not capable of selecting exclusively the beautiful, or grand, and a judgment unable to estimate the essential and the congruous.

If Mr. Martin's multiplicities of detail can be truly charged with any of these faults, then assuredly he must, to the extent of such fault, submit to condemnation. But we cannot find that he is, in this respect, obnoxious to any of the objections above mentioned. We speak, of course, of his greater works only; and wish, indeed, to limit ourselves to his *Nineveh*, and the three paintings from which he has produced his large mezzotinto plates. He depicts a *great event*, and gives *the whole*, and all its *congruous parts*. He does not, like Bassan, in the picture to be seen at Hampton Court, make the exquisite painting of a brass pan form a prominent object in a representation of the Deluge. He introduces sometimes his "vessels of silver and of gold," but it is only when they form a necessary part of his story; and they are not obtruded upon the eye, as if they would challenge the admiration of the painter of still life. In *Belshazzar's Feast* he covers the table with glittering utensils, though at the same moment the dreadful words, from the hand that has disappeared, are flashing unearthly light through the magnificent hall, and a mysterious terror has seized upon every beholder, but these utensils are the "golden and silver vessels" which had been taken from the temple of Jerusalem—and for the desecration of which that punishment was, in part, thus awfully denounced upon the proud and impious king. When, in the *Fall of Nineveh*, he mixes with his representation of so direful an event a dazzling display of jewellery and gorgeous furniture, it is because these things are essential to the great incident which occupies the foreground of the picture. Sardanapalus is about to terminate a life of voluptuousness by a daring and deliberate act of self-destruction; but he will not leave his concubines and his riches to the enemy. He has caused to be heaped up "all his gold, and silver, and royal apparel"—and they stand upon the vast pile, awaiting the torch that is already kindled. To have omitted these, would have been to tell that portion of his story more imperfectly. The artist has to represent, not some individual action, but a scene in which numberless actions are working to one end. He has to depict the fall of a great city, and the contest betwixt armies. Surely *there is not the* less of unity, because a thousand consen-

taneous actions are involved in the great one, which, without such, could itself never have had existence.

Though, as our readers have already seen, we have estimated Mr. Martin's power of physiognomical expression at a somewhat humble rate, there is, we must now add, another species of *expression*, in which he stands almost unrivalled. Its influence has been felt by all who have received pleasure from his works; but by very few has the secret of its strength been perceived. This expression it is, by which every part of a picture is made, as it were, in one grand harmony to sound the chord of that emotion which is to it as the soul by which it lives:—it is the convergence of every ray towards the one burning point;—the bowing down of every subject-part before the throne of the one ruling sentiment. And in this fine concord resides the real unity of the picture, and not in its relative fewness or multitude of parts. A disciplined army beneath one chief is itself but *one*, though consisting of thousands; and a painting may possess its integrity unbroken, though out of its fractional parts might be formed a thousand pictures. We must illustrate our meaning by referring to one of Mr. Martin's works; and shall select that which, like a sudden sunshine, burst upon the unexpecting public—his *Feast of Belshazzar*.

The story here told is of a supernatural visitation—of an immediate act of the hand of God working visibly to the human eye. A wicked and arrogant king sits with his thousand lords, his wives, and his concubines, at the feast, and impiously profanes the vessels which had been consecrated to the worship of the One God; but the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone, they praise and worship. The measure of his guilt is full; and the punishment must follow. But, in the face of all has the crime been perpetrated, and before the eyes of all must his doom be announced. In the height of their sacrilegious banquet, a hand—an armless hand—writes upon the wall the irrevocable words; and, having written them, disappears. Then is the king's countenance changed, and his thoughts trouble him, so that the joints of his loins are unloosed, and his knees smite one against another. The astrologers and the soothsayers strive in vain to read the unknown characters; but the prophet of God appears, and interprets them to the king. This interpretation is almost immediately verified; for, "in that night, is Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain." This is the subject of the picture,—a theme grand, awful and difficult. It is not a subject for a *fine colourist* merely, or an *expert draughtsman*, but for a *poet* who can embody his conceptions in *form* and *colour*.

What, then, is the great sentiment impressed by such a subject? and what is it, consequently, that the painter has to accomplish? To answer this, we again ask,—what must have been the prevailing sentiment of the spectators in the actual scene? Various emotions might, at moments, mingle in various bosoms: the king might mourn his downfall,—the queen might lament her son,—the thousand lords might tremble for their power and their riches:—but these, and every other possible feeling, must be in subjection to the overwhelming awe arising from a belief in the immediate presence of an offended and threatening God. This, then, is the great sentiment; and this it is which the painter must attempt to infuse into his picture; every thing in it must have relation to this; all must be solemn, sublime, mysterious, and awful. He has to represent a scene in which the *by himself*, not all invisibly working, is an immediate agent: but how

is this to be effected? The "fingers of a man's hand, writing upon the wall," were, to the actual spectators, sufficient to attest the supernatural presence; but, as so many preceding painters have shown, in a picture, the motionless hand is merely ridiculous. It looks too often like the fragment of a statue, or like an inflated glove, or like any thing rather than the living, but not human, hand, whose possessor, though viewless, was felt to be present. It was in the *actual motion* of this bodiless hand, leaving behind it the unknown characters, that the token of a supernatural agency was acknowledged. The moveless hand merely, or the written letters merely, would have been thought the trick of an impudent impostor; but the armless hand, *moving* before their eyes, was indeed a terrible and unearthly spectacle. *But the pictured hand cannot move;* and the painter has therefore apparently nothing left but an unhappy choice betwixt the dead unmoving fingers and the characters ready-written out,—an alternative which seems to promise little success, as is shown in the labours of other artists. We do not mean to say that *The Feast of Belshazzar* has not been admirably painted by others, but that, before the present work, there has not been, as far as our knowledge extends, anything that could pretend to be even the faintest shadowing forth of the *supernatural denunciation from God against the king of Babylon.* Mr. Martin was the first to perceive, that it was not in the bodiless hand merely, or in the unknown letters, that the mystery and the terror consisted,—but in *the sense of a present supernatural power.* To awaken this sentiment was, then, his first great object; and he perceived that, though he could not give to the hand a supernatural *motion*, he might yet impart to the already written letters a character of mystery and terror, which would equally excite the sense of a supernatural presence. This he has triumphantly accomplished, by giving them vastness of size, and a splendour, as though the hand that had traced them had guided the lightning over the wall, and left its yet burning fires imprinted there. Having accomplished this,—having raised emotion of a character so awful and sublime,—it was necessary that all the accompaniments of the scene should likewise sustain a character of grandeur and awful magnificence. Letters written as with lightning would have been ill-matched with a mean and familiar-looking chamber,—with commonplace decorations, or such objects as are every day beheld around us. To the spectators of the *actual event*, the effect might have been of equal force in a temple or in a closet; but not so to the spectators of *the picture.* By the former, nothing would have been seen but the bodiless hand, and the letters; but, by the latter, every thing will be deliberately examined; and every thing should therefore be made to sustain the mind, as much as possible, at its highest tone. The ruling sentiment of the present subject is *a sublime and supernatural awe*, and every part of the picture should, therefore, receive its character from that sentiment. Vastness and strength of architecture powerfully excite a sense of awe and grandeur; such an emotion, though differing in kind and in degree, is therefore in harmony with that ruling sentiment; and Mr. Martin has accordingly presented us with a hall of dimensions and gorgeous strength unparalleled. But when to the grand and the gigantic, we superadd some powerful moral association,—when we give to it the hoariness of antiquity,—when we deepen its solemnity by the obscurity of night,—when by concealing its limits, we lead the imagination to draw out the *vast almost into the infinite*,—then, indeed, do we awake to a

sense of awe and sublimity, beneath which the mind seems overpowe How nobly has not the artist provided for this feeling by that tren dous tower, which, buried in clouds, and darkly visible under the fl of the distant lightning, looks grimly over the roofless palace-hall, its impious builders had indeed made its top to reach unto the hea Every thing, in a word, combines to excite and sustain that emotic sublime and supernatural awe, which is the ruling sentiment, the very of the subject.

We have heard it said that Mr. Martin has never copied a picture o other master,—that he has never studied anatomy,—and that he has ra if ever, painted from the living figure. If these assertions be true, not know how he could satisfactorily clear himself from the charg negligence that must have been most injurious to him. The negle these two essential studies may amply account for two of his chief in fections,—the generally incorrect drawing of his figures, and the indif colouring of his flesh. Assuming that he is himself conscious of thes failings, it must appear surprising that the obvious cause should not occurred to him, and that the remedy, as obvious, should not have resorted to. He colours his flesh ill,—but, to colour well is not an in —it is an art; and an art is never, in its perfection, the produce of a mind, but the result of the accumulated labour and experience of He that avails himself of all that has been done by others before him hope, by the superaddition of something, to excel them all; but h trusts to his own unaided genius for that which can be learned, in its perfect state, only from the labours of others, places himself, to a c degree, in the disadvantageous situation of the man who had to st against the difficulties of its first feeble beginning. Whatever the powers of such a man may have been, he probably effected little, an soon forgotten. The painter that would colour well, must not hope, force of his own genius, to leap at once to that height which has be tained only through the united and long-continued labour of all that gone before him; but must diligently study the best patterns whic have left, and endeavour to add perfection to that which seems th perfect. Nature alone must not be his study, for he does not fin man from the dust, and breathe into his nostrils the breath of life; hi is of another clay, and must be wrought after a different fashion. must be his model, but Titian, and Vandyke, and Velasquez, must instructors. We cannot believe that it is even yet too late for Mr. to resort to the living model, and the glowing canvass of his great p cessors, for improvement in his figures and in his colouring. The st superiority, in these two particulars, of his last great picture over preceding works, justifies the belief that he might still—in the pr part, at least, of his art,—far surpass that which he has done the bes encourages the hope that he will, with unrelaxing diligence, pursue means which may conduce to farther excellence.

PART THIRD.

ıRACTERS OF EMINENT DIVINES—PHILOSOPHERS—
'ATESMEN—ORATORS—HISTORIANS—NOVELISTS—
CRITICS.

WARBURTON.*

ARBURTON, we think, was the last of our *great* divines—the last, per-
of any profession—who united profound learning with great powers
derstanding, and, along with vast and varied stores of acquired know-
, possessed energy of mind enough to wield them with ease and
ty. The days of the Cudworths and Barrows—the Hookers and
ırs, are gone by. Among the other divisions of intellectual labour, to
ı the progress of society has given birth, the business of reasoning,
ıe business of collecting knowledge, have been, in a great measure,
nto separate hands. Our scholars are now little else than pedants,
ntiquaries, and grammarians,—who have never exercised any faculty
ıemory; and our reasoners are, for the most part, but slenderly pro-
with learning; or, at any rate, make but a slender use of it in their
ning. Of the two, the reasoners are by far the best off; and, upon
subjects, have really profited by the separation. Argument from
rity is, in general, the weakest and the most tedious of all arguments;
earning, we are inclined to believe, has more frequently played the
f a bully than of a fair auxiliary; and been oftener used to frighten
e than to convince them,—to dazzle and overawe, rather than to
and enlighten. A modern writer would not, if he could, reason as
w and Cudworth often reason; and every reader, even of Warburton,
have felt that his learning often encumbers rather than assists his
ess, and, like shining armour, adds more to his terrors than to his
gth. The true theory of this separation may be, therefore, that scholars
are capable of reasoning, have ceased to make a parade of their
arship; while those who have nothing else, must continue to set it
ırd—just as gentlemen now-a-days keep their gold in their pockets,
ıd of wearing it on their clothes—while the fashion of laced suits
ırevails among their domestics. There are individuals, however, who
that a man of rank looks most dignified in cut velvet and embroidery;
hat one who is not a gentleman can now counterfeit that appearance
le too easily. We do not presume to settle so weighty a dispute;—
ınly take the liberty of observing, that Warburton lived to see the
on go out; and was almost the last native gentleman who appeared in
l trimmed coat.

* Warburton's Letters.—Vol. xiii. page 343. January 1, 1809.

He was not only the last of our reasoning scholars, but the last also, we think, of our powerful polemics. This breed too, we take it, is extinct;—and we are not sorry for it. Those men cannot be much regretted, who, instead of applying their great and active faculties in making their fellows better or wiser, or in promoting mutual kindness and cordiality among all the virtuous and enlightened, wasted their days in wrangling upon idle theories, and in applying, to the speculative errors of their equals in talents and in virtue, those terms of angry reprobation which should be reserved for vice and malignity. In neither of these characters, therefore, can we seriously lament that Warburton is not likely to have any successor.

The truth is, that this extraordinary person was a Giant in literature—with many of the vices of the Gigantic character. Strong as he was, his excessive pride and overweening vanity were perpetually engaging him in enterprises which he could not accomplish; while such was his intolerable arrogance towards his opponents, and his insolence towards those whom he reckoned as his inferiors, that he made himself very generally and deservedly odious, and ended by doing considerable injury to the cause which he intended to support. The novelty and the boldness of his manner—the resentment of his antagonists—and the consternation of his friends, insured him a considerable share of public attention at the beginning; but such was the repulsion of his moral qualities as a writer, and the fundamental unsoundness of most of his speculations, that he no sooner ceased to write, than he ceased to be read or inquired after,—and lived to see those crudite volumes fairly laid on the shelf, which he fondly expected to carry down a growing fame to posterity.

The history of Warburton, indeed, is uncommonly curious, and his fate instructive. He was bred an attorney at Newark; and probably derived, from his early practice in that capacity, that love of controversy, and that habit of scurrility, for which he was afterwards distinguished. His first literary associates were some of the heroes of the Dunciad; and his first literary adventure the publication of some poems, which well entitled him to a place among those worthies. He helped 'pilfering Tibbalds' to some notes upon Shakspeare, and spoke contemptuously of Mr. Pope's talents, and severely of his morals, in his letters to Concannen. He then hired his pen to prepare a volume on the Jurisdiction of the Court of Chancery; and having now entered the church, made a more successful endeavour to magnify his profession, and to attract notice to himself, by the publication of his once famous book on 'the Alliance between Church and State,' in which all the presumption and ambition of his nature was first made manifest.

By this time he seems to have passed over from the party of the Dunces to that of Pope; and proclaimed his conversion pretty abruptly, by writing an elaborate defence of the Essay on Man, from some imputations which had been thrown on its theology and morality. Pope received the services of this voluntary champion with great gratitude; and Warburton having now discovered that he was not only a great poet, but a very honest man, continued to cultivate his friendship with great assiduity, and with very notable success; for Pope introduced him to Mr. Murray, who made him preacher at Lincoln's Inn, and to Mr. Allen of Prior-Park, who gave him his niece in marriage,—obtained a bishopric for him,—and left him *his whole estate.* In the mean time, he published his 'Divine Legation of *Moses,*'—*the most* learned, most arrogant, and most absurd work, which

has been produced in England for a century;—and his editions of Pope, and of Shakspeare, in which he was scarcely less outrageous and fantastical. He replied to some of his answerers in a style full of insolence and brutal scurrility; and not only poured out the most tremendous abuse on the infidelities of Bolingbroke and Hume, but found occasion to quarrel with Drs. Middleton, Lowth, Jortin, Leland, and indeed almost every name distinguished for piety and learning in England. At the same time, he indited the most highflown adulation to Lord Chesterfield, and contrived to keep himself in the good graces of Lord Mansfield and Lord Hardwicke;—while, in the midst of affluence and honours, he was continually exclaiming against the barbarity of the age in rewarding genius so frugally, and in not calling in the aid of the civil magistrate to put down fanaticism and infidelity. The public, however, at last, grew weary of these blustering novelties. The bishop, as old age stole upon him, began to doze in his mitre; and though Dr. Richard Hurd, with the true spirit of an underling, persisted in keeping up the petty traffic of reciprocal encomiums, yet Warburton was lost to the public long before he sunk into dotage, and lay dead as an author for many years of his natural existence.

We have imputed this rapid decline of his reputation, partly to the unsoundness of his general speculations, and chiefly to the offensiveness of his manner. The fact is admitted even by those who pretend to regret it; and, whatever Dr. Hurd may have thought, it must have had other causes than the decay of public virtue and taste.

In fact, when we look quietly and soberly over the vehement and imposing treatises of Warburton, it is scarcely possible not to perceive, that almost every thing that is original in his doctrine or propositions is erroneous; and that his great gifts of learning and argumentation have been bestowed on a vain attempt to give currency to untenable paradoxes. His powers and his skill in controversy may indeed conceal, from a careless reader, the radical fallacy of his reasoning; and as, in the course of the argument, he frequently has the better of his adversaries upon incidental and collateral topics, and never fails to make his triumph resound over the whole field of battle, it is easy to understand how he should, for a while, have got the credit of a victory, which is now generally adjudged to his opponents. The object of 'the Divine Legation,' for instance, is to prove, that the mission of Moses was certainly from God,—because his system is the only one which does *not* teach the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments! And the object of 'the Alliance' is to show, that the church (that is, as he explains it, all the adherents of the church of England) is entitled to a legal *establishment*, and the protection of a *test law*, —because it constitutes *a separate society* from that which is concerned in the civil government, and, being equally sovereign and independent, is therefore entitled to treat with it on a footing of perfect equality. The sixth book of Virgil, we are told, in like manner, contains merely the description of the mysteries of Eleusis; and the badness of the New Testament Greek is a conclusive proof of the eloquence and inspiration of its authors. These fancies, it appears to us, require no refutation; and, dazzled and astonished as we are at the rich and variegated tissue of learning and argument with which their author has invested their extravagance, we conceive that no man of a sound and plain understanding can ever mistake them for truths, or waver, *in the* least degree, from the conviction which his *own reflection must afford of their* absurdity.

The case is very nearly the same with his subordinate general propositions, which, in so far as they are original, are all brought forward with the parade of great discoveries, and yet appear to us among the most futile and erroneous of modern speculations. We are tempted to mention two, which we think we have seen referred to by later writers with some degree of approbation, and which, at any rate, make a capital figure in all the fundamental philosophy of Warburton. The one relates to the necessary imperfection of human laws, as dealing in punishments only, and not in rewards also. The other concerns his notion of the ultimate foundation of moral obligation.

The very basis of his argument for the necessity of the doctrine of a future state to the well-being of society, is, that, by human laws, the conduct of men is only controlled by the fear of punishment, and not excited by the hope of reward. *Both* these sanctions, however, he contends, are necessary to regulate our actions, and keep the world in order; and therefore, legislators, not finding rewards in this world, have always been obliged to connect it with a future world, in which they have held out that they would be bestowed on all deservers. It is scarcely possible, we believe, to put this most important doctrine on a more injudicious foundation; and if this were the only ground either for believing or inculcating the doctrine of a future state, we should tremble at the advantages which the infidel would have in the contest. We shall not detain our readers longer, than just to point out three obvious fallacies in this, the most vaunted and confident, perhaps, of all the Warburtonian dogmata. In the *first* place, it is obvious that *disorders* in society can scarcely be said to be prevented by the hope of future rewards. The proper use of that doctrine is, not to repress vice, but to console affliction. Vice and disorder are quelled by the dread of future punishment. The despondency and distress that are soothed by the prospect of future bliss, are not *disorders* within the purview of the legislator. In the *second* place, it is obviously not true that human laws are *necessarily* deficient in the article of providing rewards. In many instances, their enactments have this direct object; and it is obvious, that if it was thought essential to the well-being of society, they might reward as often as they punish. But, in the *third* place, the whole argument proceeds upon a gross and unaccountable misapprehension of the nature and object of legislation;—a very brief explanation of which will show, both that the temporal rewards of virtue are just as sure as the temporal punishments of vice, and at the same time explain why the law has so seldom interfered to enforce the former. The law arose from human feelings and notions of justice; and those feelings and notions were, of course, before the law. The natural and necessary effect of kind and virtuous conduct is, to excite love, gratitude, and benevolence;—the effect of injury and vice is to excite resentment, anger, and revenge. While there was no law and no magistrate, men must have acted upon those feelings, and acted upon them in their whole extent. He who rendered kindness, received kindness; and he who inflicted pain and suffering, was sooner or later overtaken by retorted pain and suffering. Virtue was rewarded, therefore, and vice punished, at all times; and both, we must suppose, in the same measure and degree. The reward of virtue, however, produced no disturbance or disorder; and, after society submitted to regulation, was safely left in the hands of gratitude and *sympathetic kindness*. It was otherwise with the punishment of vice. *Resentment* and revenge tended always to a dangerous excess,—were

liable to be assumed as the pretext for unprovoked aggression,—and, at all events, had a tendency to reproduce revenge and resentment, in an interminable series of violence and outrage. The law, therefore, took this duty into its own hands. It did not invent, or impose for the first time, that sanction of punishment which was coeval with vice and with society, and is implied, indeed, in the very notion of injury :—it only transferred the right of applying it from the injured individual to the public; and tempered its application by more impartial and extensive views of the circumstances of the delinquency. But if the punishment of vice be not ultimately derived from law, neither is the reward of virtue; and although human passions made it necessary for law to undertake the regulation of that punishment, it evidently would not add to its perfection, to make it also the distributer of rewards, unless it could be shown that a similar disorder was likely to arise from leaving these to the individuals affected. It is obvious, however, not only that there is no likelihood of such a disorder, but that such an interference would be absurd and impracticable. It is true, therefore, that human laws do in general provide punishments only, and not rewards; but it is not true, that they are, on this account, imperfect or defective, or that human conduct is not actually regulated by the love of happiness, as much as by the dread of suffering. The doctrine of a future state adds, no doubt, prodigiously to *both* these motives; but it is a rash, a presumptuous, and, we think, a most shortsighted and narrow view of the case, to suppose, that it is chiefly the impossibility of rewarding virtue on earth, that has led legislators to secure the peace of society, by referring it for its recompense to Heaven.

The other dogma to which we alluded, is advanced with equal confidence and pretension; and is, if possible, still more shallow and erroneous. Speculative moralists had been formerly contented with referring moral obligation, either to a moral sense, or to a perception of utility;—Warburton, without much ceremony, put both these together: but his grand discovery is, that even this tie is not strong enough; and that the idea of moral obligation is altogether incomplete and imperfect, unless it be made to rest also on *the will of a superior*. There is no point in all his philosophy, of which he is more vain than of this pretended discovery; and he speaks of it, we are persuaded, twenty times, without once suspecting the gross fallacy which it involves. The fallacy is not, however, in stating an erroneous proposition —for it is certainly true, that the command of a superior will generally constitute an obligation: it lies altogether in supposing that this is a separate or additional ground of obligation,—and in not seeing that this vaunted discovery of a third principle for the foundation of morality, was in fact nothing but an individual instance or exemplification of the principle of utility. Why are we bound by the will of a superior?—evidently for no other reason, than because superiority implies a *power* to affect our *happiness*; and the expression of will assures us, that our happiness will be affected by our disobedience. An obligation is something which constrains or induces us to act;—but there neither is nor can be any other motive for the actions of rational and sentient beings, than the love of happiness. It is the desire of happiness—well or ill understood—seen widely or narrowly,—that necessarily dictates all our actions, and is at the bottom of all our conceptions of morality or duty: and the will of a superior can only constitute a ground of obligation, by connecting itself with this single and universal agent. If it were *possible to disjoin the idea* of our own happiness or suffering from

the idea of a superior, it is obvious that we should no longer be under obligation to conform to the will of that superior. If we should be equ secure of happiness—in mind and in body—in time and in eternity, by obeying his will, as by complying with it, it is evidently altogether in ceivable, that the expression of that will should impose any obligation t us : and although it be true that we cannot suppose such a case, it is no less a fallacy to represent the will of a superior as a third and additi ground of obligation, newly discovered by this author, and superadde the old principle of a regard to happiness, or utility. We take these stances of the general unsoundness of all Warburton's peculiar doctri from topics on which he is generally supposed to have been less extrava than on any other. Those who wish to know his feats in criticism, ma referred to the canons of Mr. Edwards; and those who admire the o nality of his Dissertation on the Mysteries, are recommended to look the *Eleusis* of *Meursius*.

Speculations like these could never be popular; and were not like attract the attention, even of the studious, longer than their novelty the glare of erudition and originality which was thrown around th protected them from deliberate consideration. But the real cause o public alienation from the works of this writer, is undoubtedly to be f in the revolting arrogance of his general manner, and the offensive co ness of his controversial invectives. These, we think, must be confess be somewhat worse than mere error in reasoning, or extravagance in the They are not only offences of the first magnitude against good taste and manners, but are likely to be attended with pernicious consequences in ters of much higher importance. Though there is no reason, we think doubt of the sincerity of this reverend person's abhorrence for vice and fidelity, we are seriously of opinion, that his writings have been substant prejudicial to the cause of religion and morality! and that it is fortunat both, that they have now fallen into general oblivion.

They have produced, in the first place, all the mischief, of a conspicuous, in some sense, a successful example of genius and learning, associated v insolence, intolerance, and habitual contumely and outrage. All men v are engaged in controversy are apt enough to be abusive and insulting and clergymen, perhaps, rather more apt than others. It is an intellec warfare, in which it is *natural*, we suspect, to be ferocious, unjust, and sparing : but experience and civilization have tempered this vehemence, gentler and more generous maxims,—and introduced a law of honour hostility, by which the fiercer elements of our nature are mastered and c trolled. No greater evil, perhaps, can be imagined, than the violatio this law from any quarter of influence and reputation;—yet the Warb tonians may be said to have done their endeavour to introduce the us poisoned weapons, and to abolish the practice of giving quarter in the f of controversy. Fortunately, their example has not been generally follow and the sect itself, though graced with mitres, and other trophies of wor success, has perished, we think, in consequence of the experiment.

A second and perhaps a still more formidable mischief arose from discredit which was brought on the priesthood, and indeed upon reli in general, by this interchange of opprobrious and insulting accusa among its ministers. If the abuse was justifiable, then the church itself *shelter to folly* and wickedness, at least as great as was to be found u *the banners* of infidelity;—if it was not justifiable, then it was appa

that the abuse of these holy men was no proof of demerit in those against whom it was directed; and the unbelievers, of course, were furnished with an objection to the sincerity of those invectives of which they themselves were the objects.

This applies to those indecent expressions of violence and contempt, in which Warburton and his followers were accustomed to indulge, when speaking of their christian and clerical opponents. But the greatest evil of all, we think, arose from the intemperance, coarseness, and acrimony of their remarks, even on those who were enemies to revelation. There is, in all well constituted minds, a natural feeling of indulgence towards those errors of opinion, to which, from the infirmity of human reason, all men are liable, and of compassion for those whose errors have endangered their happiness. It must be the natural tendency of all candid and liberal persons, therefore, to regard unbelievers with pity, and to reason with them with mildness and forbearance. Infidel writers, we conceive, may generally be allowed to be actual unbelievers; for it is difficult to imagine what other motive than a sincere persuasion of the truth of their opinions, could induce them to become objects of horror to the respectable part of any community by their disclosure. From what vices of the heart, or from what defects in the understanding, their unbelief may have originated, it may not always be easy to determine; but it seems obvious that, for the unbelief itself, they are rather to be pitied than reviled; and that the most effectual way of persuading the public that their opinions are refuted out of a regard to human happiness, is to treat their authors (whose happiness is most in danger) with some small degree of liberality and gentleness. It is also pretty generally taken for granted, that a very angry disputant is usually in the wrong; that it is not a sign of much confidence in the argument, to take advantage of the unpopularity or legal danger of the opposite doctrine; and that, when an unsuccessful and unfair attempt is made to discredit the general ability or personal worth of an antagonist, no great reliance is understood to be placed on the argument by which he may be lawfully opposed.

It is needless to apply these observations to the case of the Warburtonian controversies. There is no man, we believe, however he may be convinced of the fallacy and danger of the principles maintained by Lord Bolingbroke, by Voltaire, or by Hume, who has not felt indignation and disgust at the brutal violence, the affected contempt, and the flagrant unfairness with which they are treated by this learned author—who has not, for a moment, taken part with them against so ferocious and insulting an opponent, and wished for the mortification and chastisement of the advocate, even while impressed with the greatest veneration for the cause. We contemplate this scene of orthodox fury, in short, with something of the same emotions with which we should see a heretic subjected to the torture, or a freethinker led out to the stake by a zealous inquisitor. If this, however, be the effect of such illiberal violence, even on those whose principles are settled, and whose faith is confirmed by habit and reflection, the consequences must obviously be infinitely more pernicious for those whose notions of religion are still unformed and immature, and whose minds are open to all plausible and liberal impressions. Take the case, for instance, of a young man, who has been delighted with the eloquence of Bolingbroke, and the sagacity and ingenuity of Hume;—who knows, moreover, that the one lived in intimacy with Pope and Swift, and almost all the worthy and eminent *persons of his time*;—*and* that the other was the cordial friend of

Robertson and Blair, and was irreproachably correct and amiable in e relation of life;—and who, perceiving with alarm the tendency of so their speculations, applies to Warburton for an antidote to the poiso may have imbibed. In Warburton he will then read that Bolingbroke a paltry driveller—Voltaire a pitiable scoundrel—and Hume a puny lectician, who ought to be set on the pillory, and whose heart was as and corrupt as his understanding is contemptible! Now, what, we v ask any man of common candour and observation, is the effect wh likely to be produced on the mind of any ingenuous and able young by this style of confutation? Infallibly to make him take part with reviled and insulted literati,—to throw aside the right reverend co with contempt and disgust,—and most probably to conceive a fatal judice against the cause of religion itself, thus unhappily associated coarse and ignoble scurrility. He must know to a certainty, in the place, that *the contempt* of the orthodox champion is either affecte proceeds from most gross ignorance and incapacity;—since the abil the reviled writers is proved, not only by his own feeling and experi but by the suffrage of the public and of all men of intelligence. He think, in the second place, that the imputations on their *moral worth* false and calumnious, both from the fact of their long friendship wit purest and most exalted characters of their age, and from the obvio relevancy of this topic in a fair refutation of their errors;—and then, app the ordinary maxims by which we judge of a disputant's cause fro temper and his fairness, he disables both the judgment and the candc his instructor, and conceives a strong prejudice in favour of the cause w has been attacked in a manner so unwarrantable.

We have had occasion, oftener than once, to trace an effect like this this fierce and overbearing aspect of orthodoxy;—and we appeal to the ment of all our readers, whether it be not the very effect which it is culated to produce on all youthful minds of the least strength and origin It is to such persons, however, and to such only, that the refutation of i writers ought to be addressed. There is no need to write books ag Hume and Voltaire for the use of the learned and orthodox part of the lish clergy. Such works are necessarily supposed to be intended fo benefit of young persons, who have either contracted some partialit these seductive writers, or are otherwise in danger of being misled by t It is to be presumed, therefore, that they know and admire their rea cellences;—and it might consequently be inferred, that they will not with peculiar complacency to a refutation of their errors, which sets out a torrent of illiberal and unjust abuse of their talents and characters.

We are convinced, therefore, that the bullying and abusive tone o Warburtonian school, even in its contention with infidels, has done harm to the cause of religion, and alienated more youthful and asp minds from the true faith, than any other error into which zeal has betrayed orthodoxy. It may afford a sort of vindictive delight to the ze who stand in no need of the instruction of which it should be the vehi but it will, to a certainty, revolt and disgust all those to whom that struction was necessary,—enlist all the generous feelings of their natur the side of infidelity,—and make piety and reason itself appear like judice and bigotry. We think it fortunate, therefore, upon the wh *that the controversial* writings of Warburton are already sunk in obliv —*since, even if* we thought more highly than we do of the subst

merit of his arguments, we should still be of opinion that they were likely to do more mischief than the greater part of the sophistries which it was their professed object to counteract and discredit.

PALEY.*

The name of Dr. Paley, though scarcely to be reckoned among those of the *great* theologians and philosophers of England, is probably associated with as large and as enviable a portion of public approbation, as that of any ring ecclesiastic. With less learning and less originality than some of his stinguished predecessors, it would be difficult, perhaps, to point out his perior in soundness of judgment, or in vigilant and comprehensive saga-ty. With great strength of reasoning and power of decision, he has also nited more moderation and liberality of sentiment, than is usually to be und among disputants; and added weight to his argument by a certain ainness and sobriety of manner, that is infinitely better calculated to pro-ce conviction than the sallies of an ambitious eloquence.

His great merit lies in the clear perception of the strong or the difficult rts of a question, and in the judicious selection and perspicuous arrange-nt of his arguments: invention is less within his province; and, even hen his conclusions appear to partake of originality, it will commonly be und that they have been suggested by a minute and scrupulous examination propositions that had been furnished by others. His common way is, to eak down a subject into as many distinct parts as it really appears to ntain, and to make each of them the subject of a separate and rigorous vestigation. In consequence of this, his arguments frequently appear to narrow and circumscribed in their application; and the reader is some-mes apt to wish for the excursive speculation and ample range of a less ccurate reasoner. The truth is, however, that, upon many subjects, it is mpossible to attain precision, without this formality and detail. Sophistry ways delights in generalities; and fallacy is never so safe from detection, when inquiry is eluded by rapidity of progression, and the mind hurried om one half view of a subject to another, without ever being permitted to flect upon what has been presented to it.

Almost all the writings of Dr. Paley relate to the highest and most im-portant questions upon which human reason can be exercised, and appear have been composed with suitable caution and deliberation. They are laborate, rather than ingenious; and seem to have been diligently meditated, nd carefully arranged, rather than to have been conceived in any fervour f imagination, or poured forth in any conviction of their infallibility. The most pains are taken, therefore, to render every thing intelligible and recise; and more anxiety is shown, that nothing necessary shall be omitted, han that all superfluity should be excluded. All cavil is prevented by a alous strictness of expression; and a few homely illustrations are commonly fficient to expose those illusions, by which a false philosophy is supported so many of her unsubstantial speculations.

The progress of time, and the improving ingenuity of scepticism, have

* *Dr. Paley's Natural Theology.*—Vol. i. page 287. January, 1803.

given a new aspect to all our philosophical productions. It is no longe enough for a writer on morality or religion to explain and enforce his ow conceptions upon those important subjects; he must make way for thei reception by the extirpation of a multitude of errors, and must be upon th alert at every stage of his progress. He must advance with circumspectio as well as boldness, and fortify every position against the attacks of vigilant and formidable adversary. As the forms of error, too, are infinit and contradictory, he must incessantly be changing his posture of defence, or direction of attack; what serves for the confutation of one set of opponents, being frequently the pretext of hostility to a second. In this situation, the management of such subjects can only be entrusted with safety t skilful reasoners, and expert logicians; men, who will neither give quarte to sophistry, nor consume their forces in unprofitable contentions; who will confine their hostility to the proper object of resentment, and neither us their victories with insolence, nor refuse to yield what they have neithe power nor inducement to retain. The great art in all controversies of thi nature, is, first, to bring the argument to a point, and then to urge it steadily and closely to an issue. We do not know any writer who has observed both precepts with greater judgment and address than Dr. Paley. All thi we say in reference to his former publications: that which is now before us will not detract from his reputation, and probably will not extend it.

On the subject of Natural Theology, no one looks for originality, and no one pretends to discovery. Its great disadvantage is its extreme simplicity, and the vast multiplicity of obvious and decisive evidences that may every where be found for its illustration. The great book of the universe lies open to all mankind; and he who cannot read in it the name and the titles of its Author, will probably derive but little benefit from the labour of any commentator: their instructions may elucidate a few dark passages, and exalt our admiration of many that we already perceive to be beautiful: but the bulk of the volume is legible, without assistance; and, much as we may find out by study and meditation, it will still be as nothing, in comparison with what is forced upon our apprehension. No thinking man, we conceive, can doubt that there are marks of design in the universe; and any enumeration of the instances in which this design is manifest, appears, at first sight, to be both unnecessary and impossible. A single example seems altogether as conclusive as a thousand: and he that cannot discover any traces of contrivance in the formation of an eye, will probably retain his atheism at the end of a whole system of physiology. We are apt therefore to suspect, that the chief value of those publications that aim at establishing the being of an intelligent Creator, by a copious induction of the marks of intelligence in the creation, consists, either in their subserviency to the pleasures of devout meditation, or in the novelty, arrangement, and importance of the physical truths they contain. Upon a more mature consideration, however, we are persuaded that this is but a secondary merit in the work that is now before us, and that the reverend author has done a great, and by no means an unnecessary service, to the cause of religion by its publication. It may be worth while to consider in what its utility principally consists, and what is the chief difference between the task of an advocate of natural theology in former, and in the present times.

The ancient sceptics seem to have had nothing to set up against a *designing Deity*, but the obscure omnipotency of Chance, and the experimental *combinations* of a chaos of restless atoms. The task of the Theistic phi-

sophers was, therefore, abundantly easy in those days; and though their hysical science was by no means very correct or extensive, they seem to ave performed it in a bold and satisfactory manner. They appealed at nce to the order and symmetry of nature, and to the regularity and magificence of the grand structure of the universe. The great phenomena of e heavens, in particular, appear to have arrested their attention; and the agnitude and uniformity of the planetary movements, seem to have afrded a sufficient proof of Divine power and intelligence. It did not apear to them any objection to this argument, that nothing analogous to those henomena could be found among the products of human intelligence, or hat they were unable to explain the means which Divine Wisdom had mployed to produce them. "*Quis hunc hominem dixerit,*" says icero, "*qui cum tam certos cœli motus, tam ratos astrorum ordines, mque inter se connexa et apta viderit, neget his ullam inesse rationem, eque casu fieri dicat, quæ quanto consilio gerantur, nullo consilio asequi possumus?*"

In this broad and general way did the theists of antiquity propose their vidence of the Divine intelligence, finding it easier, and probably thinking more magnificent, and better suited to the dignity of the Deity, that the roofs of his existence should be derived from the great and sublime parts f his creation, than from the petty contrivances of animal or vegetable orgnization. If a sovereign mind was allowed to have planned the great ystem of the universe, they had no objection to admit, that bees and worms ight be generated spontaneously, or even that men and animals might be atched by the heat of the sun on the fertile banks of the Nile.

In the mean time, physical science was making slow but continual dvances; and curious inquirers were able to penetrate into the more imediate causes of many of the appearances of nature. Elated with these scoveries, which ought to have increased their veneration for the supreme ontriver of the whole, they immediately fancied they had found out the reat secret of nature; and, ascribing imaginary qualities and energies to ifferent classes of bodies, they dethroned the Deity by the agency of secondary causes, and erected a system of materialism in his stead. It was n those circumstances, we are persuaded, that certain false opinions as to he opposition of religion and philosophy originated, though they have been evived and maintained, in later times, by causes of a different description. Those whose dispositions inclined them to devout contemplation, were accustomed to look upon the wonders of nature in the gross; to consider hem as environed with a certain awful mystery; and to discountenance very attempt to pry into their origin, as a presumptuous and profane interference with the councils of Omnipotence. Inquisitive naturalists, on he other hand, were apt to forget the Lawgiver in their zealous admiration f the law; and, mocking at the pious horror of the ignorant, considered he mighty fabric of the universe as little better than a piece of mechanical uggery, that could only command our admiration, while the cause of its ovements was concealed.

This, however, was an error that was rectified by the progress of those ery speculations by which it had apparently been produced. When men egan to reason more correctly upon the appearances of nature, they soon earned to perceive that the minute texture of animal and vegetable bodies contained more wonderful indications of contrivance and design than the reat masses *of astronomy; and* that, from the greater complication of

their parts, and our more intimate experience of their uses, they were infinitely better fitted to attest the adaptation of means to ends, than the remoter wonders of the heavens. Boyle and Newton carried this principle of philosophical piety along with them into all their speculations. The microscopical observers caught the same spirit. Ray and Derham successively digested all the physics of their day into a system of natural theology. A late editor of Dr. Derham has inserted most of the modern discoveries; and, as nothing useful or meritorious can be safe from the zeal of injudicious admirers, a genius of Germany has recently presented the public with a demonstration of the being and attributes of the Deity, deduced from the history and habitudes of *insects*.

In this situation, it may at first sight appear to have been superfluous for Dr. Paley to come forward with a new work upon a subject in itself so simple, and already so learnedly discussed. It is to be observed, however, that most of the preceding publications are addressed to readers that are supposed to be already entirely convinced of the existence of a designing Creator, and seem to have been chiefly intended to promote a habit of pious meditation, and to afford materials for devout reflection on the goodness and wisdom of the Deity. They are not constructed, at least, with any express reference to the objections of atheistical writers, and neither guard against the cavils which they have made as to certain parts of the evidence, nor directly confute the false constructions they have attempted to put upon others. A work was still wanted, therefore, in which the evidences of a wise and beneficent Creator might be detailed with sufficient amplitude, while every thing was omitted that the most scrupulous scepticism could challenge, and in which the fallacy of every atheistical hypothesis might be distinctly exposed, both by a strict examination of its principle, and by the selection of such obvious phenomena as were inconsistent with the supposition of its truth. Such a work we conceive Dr. Paley had in view to compose when he entered upon this subject, and such undoubtedly is the plan and the tendency of the publication now before us.

ALISON.

Remarks on Alison's Sermons.*

The style of these Sermons is something new, we think, in the literature of this country. It is more uniformly elevated, more profusely figured—and, above all, more curiously modulated, and balanced upon a more exact and delicate rhythm, than any English composition in mere prose with which we are acquainted. In these, as well as in some more substantial characteristics, it reminds us more of the beautiful moral harangues that occur in the Telemaque of Fenelon, or of the celebrated Oraisons Funèbres of Bossuet, than of any thing of British growth and manufacture:—Nor do we hesitate at all to set Mr. Alison fairly down by the side of the last named of those illustrious Prelates. He is less lofty, perhaps; but more tender and more varied

* *Sermons, chiefly* on Particular Occasions, by Archibald Alison, LL.D.—Vol. xxiii. page 125. *September, 1814.*

—less splendid, but less theatrical—and, with fewer striking reflections on particular occurrences, has unquestionably more of the broad light of philosophy, and the milder glow of religion. In polish and dignity we do not think him at all inferior—though he has not the advantage of enhancing the simple majesty of Christianity by appeals to listening monarchs, and apostrophes to departed princes.

From the very suggestion of this parallel, it will be understood, that the strain of the discourses before us is never careless or even familiar—perhaps not always quite natural—but uniformly graceful, engaging, and impressive; and at least as far removed from the parade of a frigid rhetoric, as from the rude energy of tempestuous passion or untutored enthusiasm. If they do not abound in those bursts and flashes of eloquence which constitute the sublime of such compositions, they have all the richness, and warmth, and softness which make up their beauty; and are intimately felt to be the works of a mind at once delicate and ardent, guided by the purest taste and the most amiable feelings—and pleasing itself with bestowing a careful finish on its expressions, not more from an instinctive love of all that is beautiful and harmonious, than from an unfeigned affection and concern for the subjects on which it is employed.

We do not know, in fact, any sermons so pleasing—or so likely both to be popular, and to do good to those who are pleased with them. All the feelings are generous and gentle—all the sentiments liberal—and all the general views just and ennobling. They are calculated to lead us on to piety, through the purification of our taste, and the culture of our social affections—to found the love of God on the love of Nature and of Man—and to purge the visual orb of the soul for the contemplation of the infinite majesty of the Creator, by teaching it to recognise the unspeakable beauty and grandeur which reigns in all the aspects of his physical and moral creation. They are not, however, sermons for profound scholars or learned divines. They contain no display of erudition, nor profess to settle any knotty points in theology. Such labours have their value, no doubt, and are entitled to their praise; nor is it a light praise to have consecrated the fruits of long study and scientific research to the illustration of what is dark, or the confirmation of what is doubtful in the foundations of our faith: but we have always thought that discussions such as these could be embodied in no form less suitable to their substance than that of sermons in the vulgar tongue—or, in other words, discourses orally delivered to a promiscuous audience, the greater part of which is necessarily incapable either of following or of appreciating the merits of the reasoning—and no part of which could presume to judge of it on a mere transient recitation of the positions and authorities. There are no subjects in fact that require so patient a collation of books, and so frequent a recurrence to the early steps of our argument, as the abstruse and weighty matters that form the topics of theological controversy,—either with argumentative infidels, or the learned advocates of an erroneous faith. Such discussions, therefore, are most properly made the subject of books, or of academical instruction: but we conceive it to be nothing less than a perversion of the great purposes of ordinary preaching, to substitute them in the place of those weekly discourses by which the morals of a whole congregation are to be improved, or their devotion awakened.

It is not easy to overrate the importance of doing this effectually and well; and when we consider how great a proportion of readers are as careless—as impatient of long dissertations, and at the same time as vacant and open to

all lively impressions as the mass of an ordinary congregation, it is not easy to calculate how much good may be effected, when a pastor, who has discovered the secret of doing this, is pleased to enlarge his audience by means of the press, and to extend the benefit of his exhortations to all who are enrolled in his flock by the mere act of becoming his readers. For one man whose understanding is perplexed by the false doctrines or false philosophy, which it is the object of a Stillingfleet, a Clarke, or a Horsley, to redargue and expose, we may be assured there are at least a thousand who stand in need of the excitement and suggestions which may be furnished by the volume before us—who want to be roused to a sense of the beauty and the good that exist in the universe around them—and who are only indifferent to the feelings of their fellow creatures, and negligent of the duties they impose, for want of some persuasive monitor to awake the dormant capacities of their nature, and to make them see and feel the delights which Providence has attached to their exercise. It is lamentable, indeed, to think how many pass through life, without tasting the highest gratification, or exerting the noblest functions of their being, from no other cause than the want of some such excitement; and how many of those who have been happily distinguished for both, are able to trace back the first dawnings of that moral and intellectual existence to the accidental perusal of some work, far less fitted to produce that effect than the least of the discourses of Mr. Alison.

We are not acquainted, indeed, with any work so well fitted for the purpose; or calculated to make so beneficial an impression on the minds of those to whom such topics have not hitherto been familiar. The beauty of the style and the imagery, is almost sure to attract the attention in the first place; and the mind must be dull and sullen indeed, that offers a long resistance to the stronger charm of that indulgent philanthropy—of that warm sensibility to goodness and beauty—that amiable sympathy with youth, and innocence, and enjoyment—and that holy hope and cheerful confidence in the ultimate and universal happiness of a creation proceeding from omnipotent love—which from the grand characteristics of these eloquent discourses.

Their faults—since there must be faults in every thing that passes through our hands—are, in the first place, a little mannerism and monotony—arising from the too uniform melody of the composition, and from that emphatic tone which prevails too universally, not to become, on some occasions, both wearisome and ineffective. The necessity which the author seems to have imposed on himself, of always filling and satisfying the ear, sometimes leaves the mind unsatisfied; and an harmonious close now and then conducts us to a weak or ordinary meaning. Another, and something of a kindred fault, may perhaps be ascribed to the necessary brevity of a modern sermon. Large and comprehensive views are sometimes just opened, and then deserted, or dismissed with very slight consideration;—a sort of philosophical grandeur and majestic wisdom in the beginning of a discourse now and then holds out a promise, where there is no space left for the performance. We have scarcely admired the stateliness of the vestibule, when the door of the temple itself is closed against us:—and the lofty prelude has but just summoned us to attention, when the music is broken off, or passes to a differing measure.

We turn now to what may be called the Political discourses: and, disgusted as we have been with the hollow vaunting and hostile imprecations

h which most of our pulpits have resounded for the last twenty years—turn to them with a feeling of exultation and delight, which neither the ollection of our past misfortunes, or of our recent deliverance, can abate epress. They are full of heroic patriotism, christian humility, and pro-tic confidence :—no more eloquent or animating exhortations were ever ressed to men arming for their country ;—no more upright and tempe-e sentiments ever expressed, on occasions of great public interest and dis-sion ;—no more weighty and liberal truths ever urged upon the con-nce of an intelligent people. Independent altogether of their merit as ndid pieces of eloquence, we know no compositions better calculated to in all youthful and ingenuous minds, an ardent and exalted love of ir country, and a knowledge of the reasons for which it should be ed.

t is a fine thing, we make no doubt, to compose a learned commentary the prophet Hosea, or a profound dissertation on the intermediate state the soul ;—but we would prefer doing what Mr. Alison has done in the ume before us : and can hardly help envying the talents by which he has hed so much wisdom in so much beauty—and made us find, in the same rk, the highest gratifications of taste, and the noblest lessons of virtue.

BISHOP HEBER.*

We have no bishops on our Establishment ; and have been accustomed to nk that we are better without them. But if we could persuade ourselves t bishops in general were at all like Bishop Heber, we should tremble for Presbyterian Orthodoxy, and feel not only veneration, but something y like envy, for a communion which could number many such men ong its ministers.

The notion entertained of a Bishop, in our antiepiscopal latitudes, is ely enough, we admit, not to be altogether just :—and we are far from olding it as correct, when we say, that a Bishop, among us, is generally posed to be a stately and pompous person, clothed in purple and fine li-n, and faring sumptuously every day—somewhat obsequious to persons power, and somewhat haughty and imperative to those who are beneath n—with more authority in his tone and manner, than solidity in his rning ; and yet with much more learning than charity or humility—very d of being called my Lord, and driving about in a coach with mitres on panels, but little addicted to visiting the sick and fatherless, or earning himself the blessing of those who are ready to perish—

> ——— 'Familiar with a round
> Of ladyships—a stranger to the poor'—

corous in manners, but no foe to luxurious indulgences—rigid in main-ining discipline among his immediate dependents, and in exacting the ho-age due to his dignity from the undignified mob of his brethren ; but per-tly willing to leave to them the undivided privileges of comforting and of aching their people, and of soothing the sins and sorrows of their erring

* Bishop Heber's Journal, 2 Vols. London, 1828.—Vol. xlviii. page 313. December, 1828.

flocks—scornful, if not openly hostile, upon all occasions, to the claims of the people, from whom he is generally sprung—and presuming every thing in favour of the royal will and prerogative, by which he has been exalted—setting, indeed, in all cases, a much higher value on the privileges of the few, than the rights that are common to all, and exerting himself strenuously that the former may ever prevail—caring more, accordingly, for the interests of his order than the general good of the church, and far more for the church than for the religion it was established to teach—hating dissenters still more bitterly than infidels—but combating both rather with obloquy and invocation of civil penalties, than with the artillery of a powerful reason, or the reconciling influences of an humble and holy life—uttering now and then haughty professions of humility, and regularly bewailing, at fit seasons, the severity of those Episcopal labours, which sadden, and even threaten to abridge a life, which to all other eyes appears to flow on in almost unbroken leisure and continued indulgence.

This, or something like this, we take to be the notion that most of us Presbyterians have been used to entertain of a modern bishop: and it is mainly because they believed that the rank and opulence which the station implied, were likely to realize this character in those who should be placed in it, that our ancestors contended so strenuously for the abrogation of the order, and thought their Reformation incomplete till it was finally put down—till all the ministers of the Gospel were truly pastors of souls, and stood in no other relation to each other than as fellow labourers in the same vineyard. If this notion be utterly erroneous, the picture which Bishop Heber has here drawn of himself, must tend powerfully to correct it. If, on the other hand, it be in any respect just, he must be allowed, at all events, to have been a splendid exception. We are willing to take it either way; though we must say that we incline rather to the latter alternative—since it is difficult to suppose, with all due allowance for prejudices, that our abstract idea of a bishop should be in such flagrant contradiction to the truth, that one who was merely a fair specimen of the order, should be most accurately characterised by precisely reversing every thing that entered into that idea. Yet this is manifestly the case with Bishop Heber, of whom we do not know at this moment how we could give a better description, than by merely *reading backwards* all we have ventured to set down as characteristic of his right reverend brethren. Learned, polished, and dignified, he was undoubtedly; yet far more conspicuously kind, humble, tolerant, and laborious—zealous for his church too, and not forgetful of his station; but remembering it more for the duties than for the honours that were attached to it, and infinitely more zealous for the religious improvement, and for the happiness, and spiritual and worldly good of his fellow creatures of every tongue, faith, and complexion: indulgent to all errors and infirmities—liberal, in the best and truest sense of the word—humble and conscientiously diffident of his own excellent judgment and never-failing charity—looking on all men as the children of one God, on all Christians as the redeemed of one Saviour, and on all Christian teachers as fellow labourers, bound to help and encourage each other in their arduous and anxious task. His portion of the work, accordingly, he wrought faithfully, zealously, and well: and, devoting himself to his duty with a truly apostolical fervour, made no scruple to forego, for its sake, not merely his personal ease and comfort, but those domestic *affections* which were ever so much more valuable in his eyes, and in the *end, we fear,* consummating the sacrifice with his life! If such a character

be common among the dignitaries of the English Church, we sincerely congratulate them on the fact, and bow our heads in homage and veneration before them. If it be rare, as we fear it must be, in any church, we trust we do no unworthy service in pointing it out for honour and imitation to all; in praying that the example, in all its parts, may promote the growth of similar virtues among all denominations of Christians, in every region of the world.

FRANKLIN.*

This self-taught American is the most rational, perhaps, of all philosophers. He never loses sight of common sense in any of his speculations; and when his philosophy does not consist entirely in its fair and vigorous application, it is always regulated and controlled by it in its application and result. No individual, perhaps, ever possessed a juster understanding, or was so seldom obstructed in the use of it, by indolence, enthusiasm, or authority.

Dr. Franklin received no regular education; and he spent the greater part of his life in a society where there was no relish, and no encouragement for literature. On an ordinary mind, these circumstances would have produced their usual effects, of repressing all sort of intellectual ambition or activity, and perpetuating a generation of incurious mechanics; but to an understanding like Franklin's, we cannot help considering them as peculiarly propitious, and imagine that we can trace back to them, distinctly, almost all the peculiarities of his intellectual character.

Regular education, we think, is unfavourable to vigour or originality of understanding. Like civilization, it makes society more intelligent and agreeable; but it levels the distinctions of nature. It strengthens and assists the feeble; but it deprives the strong of his triumph, and casts down the hopes of the aspiring. It accomplishes this, not only by training up the mind in an habitual veneration for authorities, but, by leading us to bestow a disproportionate degree of attention upon studies that are only valuable as keys or instruments for the understanding, they come at last to be regarded as ultimate objects of pursuit; and the means of education are absurdly mistaken for its end. How many powerful understandings have been lost in the Dialectics of Aristotle! And of how much good philosophy are we daily defrauded, by the preposterous error of taking a knowledge of prosody for useful learning! The mind of a man, who has escaped this training, will at least have fair play. Whatever other errors he may fall into, he will be safe at least from these infatuations. If he thinks proper, after he grows up, to study Greek, it will be for some better purpose than to become acquainted with its dialects. His prejudices will be those of a man, and not of a schoolboy; and his speculations and conclusions will be independent of the maxims of tutors, and the oracles of literary patrons.

The consequences of living in a refined and literary community, are nearly of the same kind with those of a regular education. There are so many critics to be satisfied—so many qualifications to be established—so many rivals to encounter, and so much derision to be hazarded, that a young man

* *The Works of Dr. Franklin.*—Vol. viii. page 327. July, 1806.

is apt to be deterred from so perilous an enterprize, and led to seek for distinction in some safer line of exertion. He is discouraged by the fame and the perfection of certain models and favourites, who are always in the mouths of his judges, and, "under them, his genius is rebuked," and his originality repressed, till he sinks into a paltry copyist, or aims at distinction by extravagance and affectation. In such a state of society, he feels that mediocrity has no chance of distinction: and what beginner can expect to rise at once into excellence? He imagines that mere good sense will attract no attention; and that the manner is of much more importance than the matter, in a candidate for public admiration. In his attention to the manner, the matter is apt to be neglected; and, in his solicitude to please those who require elegance of diction, brilliancy of wit, or harmony of periods, he is in some danger of forgetting that strength of reason, and accuracy of observation, by which he first proposed to recommend himself. His attention, when extended to so many collateral objects, is no longer vigorous or collected;—the stream, divided into so many channels, ceases to flow either deep or strong;—he becomes an unsuccessful pretender to fine writing, and is satisfied with the frivolous praise of elegance or vivacity.

We are disposed to ascribe so much power to these obstructions to intellectual originality, that we cannot help fancying, that if Franklin had been bred in a college, he would have contented himself with expounding the metres of Pindar, and mixing argument with his port in the common room; and that if Boston had abounded with men of letters, he would never have ventured to come forth from his printing-house, or been driven back to it, at any rate, by the sneers of the critics, after the first publication of his Essays in the Busy Body.

This will probably be thought exaggerated; but it cannot be denied, we think, that the contrary circumstances in his history had a powerful effect in determining the character of his understanding, and in producing those peculiar habits of reasoning and investigation by which his writings are distinguished. He was encouraged to publish, because there was scarcely any one around him whom he could not easily excel. He wrote with great brevity, because he had not leisure for more voluminous compositions, and because he knew that the readers to whom he addressed himself were, for the most part, as busy as himself. For the same reason, he studied great perspicuity and simplicity of statement. His countrymen had no relish for fine writing, and could not easily be made to understand a deduction depending on a long or elaborate process of reasoning. He was forced, therefore, to concentrate what he had to say; and since he had no chance of being admired for the beauty of his composition, it was natural for him to aim at making an impression by the force and the clearness of his statements.

His conclusions were often rash and inaccurate, from the same circumstances which rendered his productions concise. Philosophy and speculation did not form the business of his life: nor did he dedicate himself to any particular study, with a view to exhaust and complete the investigation of it in all its parts, and under all its relations. He engaged in every interesting inquiry that suggested itself to him, rather as the necessary exercise of a powerful and active mind, than as a task which he had bound himself to perform. He cast a quick and penetrating glance over the facts and the *data* that were presented to him; and drew his conclusions with a *rapidity and precision* that have not often been equalled; but he did not

stop to examine the completeness of the *data* upon which he proceeded, nor to consider the ultimate effect or application of the principles to which he had been conducted. In all questions, therefore, where the facts upon which he was to determine, and the materials from which his judgment was to be formed, were either few in number, or of such a nature as not to be overlooked, his reasonings are, for the most part, perfectly just and conclusive, and his decisions unexceptionably sound; but where the elements of the calculation were more numerous and widely scattered, it appears to us that he has often been precipitate, and that he has either been misled by a partial apprehension of the conditions of the problem, or has discovered only a portion of the truth which lay before him. In all physical inquiries; in almost all questions of particular and immediate policy; and in much of what relates to the practical wisdom and the happiness of private life, his views will be found to be admirable, and the reasoning by which they are supported most masterly and convincing. But upon subjects of general politics, of abstract morality, and political economy, his notions appear to be more unsatisfactory and incomplete. He seems to have wanted leisure, and perhaps inclination also, to spread out before him the whole vast premises of these extensive sciences, and scarcely to have had patience to hunt for his conclusions through so wide and intricate a region as that upon which they invited him to enter. He has been satisfied, therefore, on every occasion, with reasoning from a very limited view of the facts, and often from a particular instance; he has done all that sagacity and sound sense could do with such materials: but it cannot excite wonder, if he has sometimes overlooked an essential part of the argument, and often advanced a particular truth into the place of a general principle. He seldom reasoned upon these subjects at all, we believe, without having some practical application of them immediately in view; and as he began the investigation rather to determine a particular case than to establish a general maxim, so he probably desisted as soon as he had relieved himself of the present difficulty.

There are not many among the thorough-bred scholars and philosophers of Europe, who can lay claim to distinction in more than one or two departments of science or literature. The uneducated tradesman of America has left writings that call for our attention, in natural philosophy,—in politics,—in political economy,—and in general literature and morality.

Of his labours in the department of ***Physics***, we do not propose to say much. They were almost all suggested by views of utility in the beginning, and were, without exception, applied, we believe, to promote those views in the end. His letters upon ***Electricity*** have been more extensively circulated than any of his other writings; and are entitled to more praise and popularity than they seem ever to have met with in this country. Nothing can be more admirable than the luminous and graphical precision with which the experiments are narrated; the ingenuity with which they are projected; and the sagacity with which the conclusion is inferred, limited, and confirmed.

The most remarkable thing, however, in these, and indeed in the whole of his physical speculations, is the unparalleled simplicity and facility with which the reader is conducted from one stage of the inquiry to another. The author never appears for a moment to labour, or to be at a loss. The most ingenious and profound explanations are suggested, as if they were the most natural and obvious way of accounting for the phenomena; and

the author seems to value himself so little on his most important discoveries, that it is necessary to compare him with others, before we can form a just notion of his merits. As he seems to be conscious of no exertion, he feels no partiality for any part of his speculations, and never seeks to raise the reader's idea of their importance, by any arts of declamation or eloquence. Indeed, the habitual precision of his conceptions, and his invariable practice of referring to specific facts and observations, secured him, in a great measure, both from those extravagant conjectures in which so many naturalists have indulged, and from the zeal and enthusiasm which seems so naturally to be engendered in their defence. He was by no means averse to give scope to his imagination, in suggesting a variety of explanations of obscure and unmanageable phenomena; but he never allowed himself to confound these vague and conjectural theories with the solid results of experience and observation. In his Meteorological papers, and in his Observations upon Heat and Light, there is a great deal of such bold and original suggestions: but the author evidently sets little value upon them; and has no sooner disburdened his mind of the impressions from which they proceeded, than he seems to dismiss them entirely from his consideration, and turns to the legitimate philosophy of experiment with unabated diligence and humility.

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Our limits will not permit us to make any analysis of the physical papers contained in this collection. They are all admirable for the clearness of the description, the felicity and familiarity of the illustrations, and the singular sagacity of the remarks with which they are interspersed. The theory of whirlwinds and water-spouts, as well as the observations on the course of the winds and on cold, seem to be excellent. The paper called Maritime Observations is full of ingenuity and practical good sense; and the remarks on Evaporation, and on the Tides, most of which are contained in a series of letters to a young lady, are admirable, not merely for their perspicuity, but for the interest and amusement they are calculated to communicate to every description of readers. The remarks on Fire-places and Smoky Chimneys are infinitely more original, concise, and scientific, than those of Count Rumford; and the observations on the Gulph-stream afford, we believe, the first example of just theory, and accurate investigation, applied to that phenomenon.

Dr. Franklin, we think, has never made use of the mathematics, in his investigation of the phenomena of nature; and though this may render it surprising that he has fallen into so few errors of importance, we conceive that it helps in some measure to explain the unequalled perspicuity and vivacity of his expositions. An algebraist, who can work wonders with letters, seldom condescends to be much indebted to words, and thinks himself entitled to make his sentences obscure, provided his calculations be distinct. A writer who has nothing but words to make use of, must make all the use he can of them: he cannot afford to neglect the only chance he has of being understood.

We should now say something of the political writings of Dr. Franklin, —the productions which first raised him into public office and eminence, and which will be least read or attended to by posterity. They may be divided into two parts: those which relate to the internal affairs and provincial differences of the American colonies, before their quarrel with the mother country; and those which relate to that quarrel and its consequences.

The former are no longer in any degree interesting: and the editor has done wisely, we think, in presenting his readers with an abstract only of the longest of them. This was published in 1759, under the title of an Historical Review of the Constitution of Pennsylvania, and consisted of upwards of 500 pages, composed for the purpose of showing that the political privileges reserved to the founder of the colony had been illegally and oppressively used. The Canada pamphlet, written in 1760, for the purpose of pointing out the importance of retaining that colony at the peace, is given entire; and appears to be composed with great force of reason, and in a style of extraordinary perspicuity. The same may be said of what are called the Albany Papers, or the plan for a general political union of the colonies in 1754; and of a variety of other tracts on the provincial politics of that day. All these are worth preserving, both as monuments of Dr. Franklin's talents and activity, and as affording, in many places, very excellent models of strong reasoning and popular eloquence: but the interest of the subjects is now completely gone by; and the few specimens of general reasoning which we meet with, serve only to increase our regret that the talents of the author should have been wasted on such perishable materials.

There is not much written on the subject of the dispute with the colonies; and most of Dr. Franklin's papers on that subject are already well known to the public. His examination before the House of Commons in 1766, affords a striking proof of the extent of his information, the clearness and force of his *extempore* composition, and the steadiness and self-possession which enabled him to display these qualities with so much effect upon such an occasion. His letters before the commencement of hostilities, are full of grief and anxiety; but no sooner did matters come to extremities, than he appears to have assumed a certain keen and confident cheerfulness, not unmixed with a seasoning of asperity, and more vindictiveness of spirit than perhaps became a philosopher.*

Of the merit of this author as a political economist, we have already had occasion to say something, in the general remarks which we made on the character of his genius; and we cannot now spare time to go much into particulars. He is perfectly sound upon many important and practical points;—upon the corn-trade, and the theory of money, for instance; and also upon the more general doctrines, as to the freedom of commerce, and the principle of population. In the more elementary and abstract parts of the science, however, his views seem to have been less just and luminous. He is not very consistent or profound in what he says of the effects of luxury; and seems to have gone headlong into the radical error of the *Economistes*, when he maintains, that all that is done by manufacture, is to embody the value of the manufacturer's subsistence in his work, and that agriculture is the only source from which a real increase of wealth can be derived. Another favourite position is, that all commerce is *cheating*, where a commodity, produced by a certain quantity of labour, is exchanged for another, on which more labour has been expended; and that the only *fair* price of any thing, is some other thing requiring the same exertion to bring it to market. This is evidently a very narrow and erroneous view of the nature of commerce. The fair price to the purchaser is, whatever he deliberately

* The Reviewer inserts here several interesting extracts from the letters which passed between Dr. Franklin and Lord Howe, when his Lordship arrived off the American Coast with what were called the pacificatory proposals in 1776.

chooses to give, rather than go without the commodity;—it is no matter to him, whether the seller bestowed much or little labour upon it, or whether it came into his possession without any labour at all;—whether it be a diamond, which he picked up, or a picture, at which he had been working for years. The commodity is not valued by the purchaser, on account of the labour which is supposed to be embodied in it, but solely on account of certain qualities, which he finds convenient or agreeable: he compares the convenience and delight which he expects to derive from this object with the convenience and delight which is afforded by the things asked in exchange for it; and if he find the former preponderate, he consents to the exchange, and makes a beneficial bargain. We have stated the case in the name of a purchaser, because, in barter, both parties are truly purchasers, and act upon the same principles; and it is easy to show, that all commerce resolves itself, ultimately, into barter. There can be no unfairness in trade, except where there is concealment on the part of the seller, either of the defects of the commodity, or of the fact that the purchaser may be supplied with it at a cheaper rate by another. It is a matter of *fact*, but not of *morality*, that the price of most commodities will be influenced by the labour employed in producing them.—If they are capable of being produced in unlimited quantities, the competition of the producers will sink the price very nearly to what is necessary to maintain this labour; and the impossibility of continuing the production, without repaying that labour, will prevent it from sinking lower. The doctrine does not apply at all to cases where the materials, or the skill necessary to work them up, are scarce in proportion to the demand. The author's speculations on the effects of paper-money, seem also to be superficial and inaccurate. *Statistics* had not been carefully studied in the days of his activity; and, accordingly, we meet with a good deal of loose assumption, and sweeping calculation, in his writings. Yet he had a genius for exact observation, and complicated detail; and probably wanted nothing but leisure, to have made very great advances in this branch of economy.

As a writer on morality and general literature, the merits of Dr. Franklin cannot be estimated properly, without taking into consideration the peculiarities that have been already alluded to in his early history and situation. He never had the benefit of any academical instruction, nor of the society of men of letters;—his style was formed entirely by his own judgment and occasional reading; and most of his moral pieces were written while he was a tradesman, addressing himself to the tradesmen of his native city. We cannot expect, therefore, either that he should write with extraordinary elegance or grace; or that he should treat of the accomplishments, follies, and occupations of polite life. He had no great occasion, as a moralist, to expose the guilt and the folly of gaming or seduction; or to point a poignant and playful ridicule against the lighter immoralities of fashionable life.

His account of his own life, down to the year 1730, has been in the hands of the public since 1790. It is written with great simplicity and liveliness, though it contains too many trifling details and anecdotes of obscure individuals. It affords a striking example of the irresistible force with which talents and industry bear upwards in society; as well as an impressive illustration of the substantial wisdom and good policy of invariable integrity and candour. We should think it a very useful reading *for all young* persons of unsteady principle, who have their fortunes to *make or to mend* in the world.

Upon the whole, we look upon the life and writings of Dr. Franklin as affording a striking illustration of the incalculable value of a sound and well-directed understanding, and of the comparative uselessness of learning and laborious accomplishments. Without the slightest pretensions to the character of a scholar or a man of science, he has extended the bounds of human knowledge on a variety of subjects, which scholars and men of science had previously investigated without success; and has only been found deficient in those studies which the learned have generally turned from in disdain. We would not be understood to say any thing in disparagement of scholarship and science; but the value of these instruments is not to be overrated by their possessors; and it is a wholesome mortification, to show them that the work may be done without them. We have long known that their employment does not insure its success.*

BENTHAM.†

Mr. Bentham is now far advanced in a life which he has generously devoted to the service of his fellow creatures. More than fifty years he has employed in labours, which had no other object than to improve the condition of mankind. According to him, Utility is the foundation of all Morals, and should be the object of all Legislation: not that attention to the interests of particular individuals at the expense of the general good,—that selfishness, which some moralists affect to understand as meant by what is useful,—but *general* utility,—an augmentation of the happiness, and a diminution of the misery of the great mass of individuals of which every community is composed.

Never did any philosopher better conform his life to his doctrines, or more happily illustrate his principles by his conduct. He has consumed his days in endeavouring to be useful to others; but, according to the common notions of the world, he has spent them uselessly to himself. Having completed his education at Westminster School, and afterwards at the University of Oxford, with much distinction, he was called early to the Bar. His connexions (for he was the son of a very eminent solicitor) must have given him an early introduction to business; and his learning, his extraordinary talents, and his indefatigable application, rendered his success in the profession, if he had continued to follow it, matter of certainty. The first eminence at the Bar, and the opulence which attends it, were at his command; and, if he could have persuaded himself to accommodate his political principles to the wishes of those in power, the most splendid station, and the highest honours, would have been infallibly within his reach. From those brilliant prospects he voluntarily turned away; and after a very few years of practice, he relinquished the profession, shut himself up in the retirement of his study, and devoted himself to the task of legislation. A citizen of the world in its purest sense, he has suffered no opportunity which has presented itself of benefiting his fellow men in any portion of the globe, to pass away without endeavouring to improve it.

* The Reader is referred to Vol. xxviii. page 275, for further remarks on the character of Franklin.

† *Bentham on Codification*—*Vol.* xxix. *page* 217. November, 1817.

To France, at the beginning of the Revolution, when every
and enlightened mind looked forward with sanguine hopes to the
that seemed dawning upon mankind, and when the National Asse
in possession of means of improving the human condition, such
before were commanded by any assembly of men—to France, at
ment of delusive hope, he made a generous tender of his services
their judicial establishments, upon their colonies, and upon the
er, as he termed it, the tactics of their Assembly, he composed a
mitted to them different tracts, containing new, but at the same
soundest views of reason and of policy. If the rules for gover
proceedings of their Assembly alone had been adopted, those disor
calamities which blighted all the fair prospects that were then o
the view of the nation, and of the rest of Europe, would in all pr
have been averted. For Poland, for Russia, for America, he
been desirous of exercising his philanthropic labours. With resp
own country, whenever an occasion has occurred for offering any
ment of its laws or its policy, he has eagerly availed himself of i
the statutes of usury; upon the taxes imposed on law proceedin
the reform projected in the judicial establishments of Scotland; u
labour, and upon the evils and abuses of that system of penal co
which has been adopted in the place of it; upon all these importa
he has given to the public his enlarged and enlightened views.
has laboured for all nations, and for ages yet to come, in his great
—his "Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislati
"Treatise on Civil and Penal Legislation;" his "Theory of Pun
and Rewards;" and his "Essay on the Tactics of Political Assem

The beneficial effects which might have been expected from these
compositions, have not, it is true, as yet been produced. We ar
to discover the traces of these works in the improved condition
portion of the human race. The noblest reward which, in this o
state, any human being can receive—that of contemplating the
of which he is himself the author, the scattering plenty o'er a smil
and reading his history in a nation's eyes—this reward it has not
good fortune to obtain: but, let it not be imagined that his merits h
wholly unrequited, and that he has spent his excellent life only in
toil and cheerless disappointment. From several passages disperse
ferent parts of his writings, it is evident that he is not unconscious o
extraordinary powers; that the truth, so manifest to others, is no
himself,—but that he is fully convinced, that, sooner or later, the
come, when his merits will be justly appreciated, and the high im
of his services acknowledged; that in after times, his principle
generally adopted; and that, if not to his contemporaries, yet
ages, and to yet uncivilized nations, he will be a Teacher and a L
This alone it is—this anticipation of future fame, and of an ass
mortality—his certainty that the seeds now sown will infallibly bri
though a late, yet an ample harvest of human happiness, which
induced him, under every discouragement, and with nothing but a
confidence in the truth and importance of his principles to cheer
so long a series of years, to persevere in devoting his whole time to
pursuit, and in sacrificing to it fortune, pleasure, and all the dazzli
hat ambition could hold out;—in giving up every meaner enjoy
he sublime gratification of becoming a great benefactor to mankin

e duty of impartial criticism would be ill discharged, if, after having
n as we have of Mr. Bentham's extraordinary merit, we were to say
ng of his defects. We are fully sensible of them; and we have observed
with deep regret; for we can regard in no other light than that of a
c misfortune whatever prevents his writings from being known, and
utility and importance from being universally acknowledged. What
ipally obstructs their circulation, is the style in which they are com-
. Unlike most authors, Mr. Bentham's first publications are, in
of writing, the most perfect; and long habit and frequent exercise,
d of improving his language, seem only to have rendered it perplexed,
re and uncouth. English literature hardly affords any specimens of
e correct, concise, and perspicuous style, than that of the "*Fragment
vernment*," which was the first of Mr. Bentham's works, or the
test against Law Taxes," and a great part of the "*Defence of Usury*,"
were early productions of his mind. Since those publications, he
by great effort and study, to have rendered his style intricate, and
guage obscure. His frequent inversions, his long parentheses, the
and harshness of many of the terms which he has so often, and,
st say, on many occasions, so unnecessarily invented, and the length
mplication of his periods, have rendered some of his compositions
e to all who will not, in spite of their repulsive forms, persevere in
ficult task of studying rather than reading them. It is indeed when
aks by another's lips, that he appears to most advantage; and it is to
ces of style which Mr. Dumont has given him, that he owes the re-
n which he has acquired, and which is, from that cause, much greater
ign countries than in his own. Notwithstanding, however, all the
rd circumstances which have prevented the genius of Bentham from
justly appreciated by his contemporaries, it must be accounted an
e of rare good fortune, that such a man as Dumont became his ac-
nce and his friend. If it very seldom happens, that, to such ex-
nary talents as Bentham possesses, is united an ardent desire to
them totally and exclusively to the service of makind; it is no less
non to find a writer possessed of the eloquence, the powers of
ement, and the perspicuity and vigour of expression which so emi-
distinguish Dumont, contented, instead of applying his great endow-
o some original work which might immortalize himself, to submit,
o other motive than that of benefiting his fellow-creatures, to the
office of setting forth another's ideas to advantage, and of advancing
's fame. As the merit of the greatest philosopher of antiquity
have been little known to posterity but for the sublime writings of
quent disciple, so it is possible that, but for Dumont, Bentham's
ion might never have emerged from obscurity.

not, however, to Mr. Bentham's style alone that we find reason to
Nothing, in our opinion, can be more injudicious than the manner
h he has, in his various writings, combated existing evils. It has
ly said, that we always weaken our attack when we exaggerate the
ttacked. This, Mr. Bentham appears to us almost always to do:
en we observe the language in which he inveighs against the sup-
rauds of lawyers, the corruption of boroughmongers, and the imputed
cy of public men of all parties, we blush to find some features of
lance between one of the first philosophers of the age, and that un-
lass of literary persons, whom necessity impels, or the capricious

appetite of the public invites to exaggerate, and misrepresent, and
niate, in pursuit of a subsistence at once discreditable and precari

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SWIFT. †

The transition of a young Whig into an old Tory—the gradu
off of prudent men from unprofitable virtues, is, perhaps, too co
occurrence to deserve much notice, or justify much reprobation. B
desertion of his first principles was neither gradual nor early,—
accompanied by such circumstances as really require to be expose
and cannot well be passed over in a fair account of his life and c
He was bred a Whig under Sir William Temple—he took the title
in various productions; and, during all the reign of King Willia
strenuous, and indeed an intolerant advocate of Revolution princi
Whig pretensions. His first patrons were Somers, Portland, and
and under that ministry, the members of which he courted in priv
defended in public, he received church preferment to the value of n
a year (equal at least to 1200*l.* at present), with the promise of stil
favours. He was dissatisfied, however, because his livings wer
England; and having been sent over on the affairs of the Irish
1710, when he found the Whig ministry in a tottering condition,
porized for a few months, till he saw that their downfall was inevita
then, without even the pretext of any public motive, but on the
ground of not having been sufficiently rewarded for his former ser
went over in the most violent and decided manner to the prevailin
for whose gratification he abused his former friends and benefacto
a degree of virulence and rancour, to which it would not be too
apply the term of brutality; and in the end, when the approachi
of the Queen, and their internal dissensions, made his services
importance to his new friends, openly threatened to desert them a
retire from the scene, unless they made a suitable provision for hi
having, in this way, extorted the deanery of St. Patrick's, which h
complained of as quite inadequate to his merits, he counselled
that must have involved the country in a civil war, for the mere c
keeping his party in power; and, finally, on the Queen's death, r
a state of despicable despondency and bitterness to his living, where
tinued, to the end of his life, to libel liberty and mankind with un
and pitiable rancour—to correspond with convicted traitors to th
tution they had sworn to maintain—and to lament as the worst of ca
the dissolution of a ministry which had no merit but that of having
him advancement, and of which several of the leading members imm
indemnified themselves by taking office in the court of the Pretend

As this part of his conduct is passed over a great deal too slightl

* The admirable article on *Codification*, to which these observations on the chara
Bentham form the introduction, will be found under the division of this work, containing
"Law and Jurisprudence."

† *Sketch of his* Political Character. Scott's Life of Swift.—Vol. xxvii. page 10.
1816.

grapher; and as nothing can be more pernicious than the notion, that e political sins of eminent persons should be forgotten in the estimate of eir merits, we must beg leave to verify the comprehensive sketch we have w given, by a few references to the documents that are to be found in e volumes before us. Of his original Whig professions, no proof will obably be required, the fact being notorious, and admitted by all his bio-phers. Abundant evidence, however, is furnished by his first successful phlet in defence of Lord Somers, and the other Whig Lords impeached 1701;—by his own express declaration in another work (vol. iii. p. 240), t "having been long conversant with the Greek and Latin authors, and efore a lover of liberty, he was naturally inclined to be what they call hig in politics;"—by the copy of verses in which he deliberately de-ates himself "a Whig, and one who wears a gown;"—by his exulting ment to Tisdal, whom he reproaches with being a Tory, and says—o cool your insolence a little, know that the Queen, and Court, and e of Lords, and half the Commons almost, are Whigs, and the number y increases:"—and, among innumerable other proofs, by the memo-e verses on Whitehall, in which, alluding to the execution of King rles in front of that building, he is pleased to say, with more zeal than d prosody,

"That theatre produced an action truly great,
On which eternal acclamations wait," &c.

Such being the principles, by the zealous profession of which he had first ined distinction and preferment, and been admitted to the friendship of men as Somers, Addison, and Steele, it only remains to be seen on occasion, and on what considerations, he afterwards renounced them. , of itself, a tolerably decisive fact, that this change took place just when Whig ministry went out of power, and their adversaries came into full ession of all the patronage and interest of the government. The whole er, however, is fairly spoken out in various parts of his own writings: d we do not believe there is any where on record a more barefaced wal of political apostasy, undisguised and unpalliated by the slightest ur or pretence of public or conscientious motives. It is quite a singular , we believe, in the history of this sort of conversion, that he nowhere ends to say that he had become aware of any danger to the country from continuance of the Whig ministry—nor ever presumes to call in ques-the patriotism or penetration of Addison and the rest of his former as-es, who remained faithful to their first professions. His only apology, hort, for this sudden dereliction of the principles which he had main-ed for near forty years—for it was at this ripe age that he got the first pse of his youthful folly—is a pretence of ill usage from the party h whom he had held them; a pretence—to say nothing of its inherent eness—which appears to be utterly without foundation, and of which it enough to say, that no mention is made, till that same party is overthrown. hile they remain in office, they have full credit for the sincerity of their od wishes (see vol. xv. p. 250, etc.):—and it is not till it becomes both e and profitable to abuse them, that we hear of their ingratitude. Nay, critically and judiciously timed is this discovery of their unworthiness, , even after the worthy author's arrival in London in 1710, when the ovements had begun which terminated in their ruin, he continues, for me *months, to keep on fair* terms with them, and does not give way to

his well-considered resentment, till it is quite apparent that his inter must gain by the indulgence. He says, in the Journal to Stella, a few d after his arrival, "The Whigs would gladly lay hold on me, as at wig, wh they are drowning,—and their great men are making me their cha apologies. But my Lord Treasurer (Godolphin) received me with a go deal of coldness, which has enraged me so, that I am almost vowing m venge." In a few weeks after—the change being by that time complete he takes his part definitively, and makes his approaches to Harley, in manner which we should really imagine no *rat* of the present day cou have confidence enough to imitate. In mentioning his first interview wi that eminent person, he says, "I had prepared him before by another han where he was very intimate, and *got myself represented* (which I mig justly do) *as one extremely ill used by the last ministry*, after some ob gation, because I refused to go certain lengths they would have m (Vol. xv. p. 340.) About the same period, he gives us farther lights into t conduct of this memorable conversion, in the following passages of the Journ

"Oct. 7. He (Harley) told me he must bring Mr. St. John and me a quainted; and spake so many things of personal kindness and esteem that I am inclined to believe what some friends had told me, that would do every thing *to bring me over*. He desired me to dine with hi on Tuesday; and, after four hours being with him, set me down at S James's coffee-house in a hackney-coach.

"I must tell you a great piece of refinement in Harley. He charged me come and see him often; I told him I was loath to trouble him, in so much business as he had, and desired I might have leave to come at his low which he immediately refused, and said, 'That was no place for friends

"I believe never was any thing compassed so soon: and purely done my personal credit with Mr. Harley; who *is so excessively obliged that I know not what to make of it, unless to show the rascals of other party, that they used a man unworthily who had deserved bet* He speaks all the kind things to me in the world.—Oct. 14. I stand w the new people ten times better than ever I did with the old, and fa times more caressed." *Life*, Vol. i. p. 126.

"Nov. 8. Why should the Whigs think I came to England to le them? But who the devil cares what they think? Am I under obl tions in the least to any of them all? Not them, ungrateful dogs. I make them repent their usage of me, before I leave this place. T say the same thing here *of my leaving the Whigs; but they own t cannot blame me, considering the treatment I have had*," etc. etc.

If he scrupled about going lengths with his Whig friends, he seem have resolved, that his fortune should not be hurt by any delicacy of sort in his new connexion;—for he took up the cudgels this time with ferocity of a hireling, and the rancour of a renegade. In taking upon h self the conduct of the paper called "The Examiner," he gave a new c racter of acrimony and bitterness to the contention in which he mingle and not only made the most furious and unmeasured attacks upon the boc the party to which it had formerly been his boast that he belonged, but sin out, with a sort of savage discourtesy, a variety of his former friends and nefactors, and made them, by name and description, the objects of the most lignant abuse. Lord Somers, Godolphin, Steele, and many others with w *he had formerly* lived in intimacy, and from whom he had received obligati *were successively* attacked in public with the most rancorous personali

and often with the falsest insinuations: in short, as he has himself emphatically expressed it in the Journal, he "libelled them all round." While he was thus abusing men he could not have ceased to esteem, it is quite natural, and in course, to find him professing the greatest affection for those he hated and despised. A thorough partisan is a thorough despiser of sincerity; and nomanism seems to have got over that weakness more completely than the reverend person before us. In every page of the Journal to Stella, we find a triumphant statement of things he was writing or saying to the people about him, in direct contradiction to his real sentiments. We may quote a line or two from the first passage that presents itself. "I desired my Lord Radnor's brother to let my Lord know I would call on him at six, which I did; and was arguing with him three hours to bring him over to us; and I spoke so closely, that I believe he will be tractable. But he is a scoundrel; *and though I said I only talked from my love to him, I told a lie; for I did not care if he were hanged: but every one gained over is of consequence.*"—Vol. iii. p. 2. We think there are not many even of those who have served a regular apprenticeship to corruption and jobbing, who could go through their base task with more coolness and hardihood than this pious neophyte.

These few references are, of themselves, sufficient to show the spirit and the true motives of this dereliction of his first principles; and seem entirely to exclude the only apology which the partiality of his biographer has been able to suggest, viz. that though, from first to last, a Whig in politics, he was all along still more zealously a High-Churchman as to religion; and left the Whigs merely because the Tories seemed more favourable to ecclesiastical pretensions. It is obvious, however, that this is quite inadmissible. The Whigs were as notoriously connected with the Low-Church party when he joined and defended them, as when he deserted and reviled them;—nor is this anywhere made the specific ground of his revilings. It would not have been very easy, indeed, to have asserted such a principle as the motive of his libels on the Earl of Nottingham, who, though a Whig, was a zealous High-Churchman, or his eulogies on Bolingbroke, who was pretty well known to be no churchman at all. It appears pretty plain, indeed, that Swift's High-Church principles were merely a part of his selfishness and ambition, and meant nothing else than a desire to raise the consequence of the order to which he happened to belong. If he had been a layman, we have no doubt he would have treated the pretensions of the priesthood, as he treated the persons of all priests who were opposed to him, with the most bitter and irreverent disdain. Accordingly, he is so far from ever recommending Whig principles of government to his High-Church friends, or from confining his abuse of the Whigs to their tenets in matters ecclesiastical, that he goes the whole length of proscribing the party, and proposing, with the desperation of a true apostate, that the Monarch should be made substantially absolute by the assistance of a military force, in order to make it impossible that their principles should ever again acquire any preponderance in the country. It is impossible, we conceive, to give any other meaning to the advice contained in his "Free Thoughts on the State of Affairs," which he wrote just before the Queen's death, and which Bolingbroke himself thought too strong for publication even at that critical period. His leading injunction there, is to adopt a system of the most rigorous exclusion of all Whigs from any kind of employment; and that, as they cannot be too much or too soon disabled, they ought to be proceeded against with as strong measures as

can possibly consist with the lenity of our government; so that in no time to come it should be in the power of the Crown, even if it wished it, to choose an ill majority in the House of Commons. This great work, he adds very explicitly, could only be well carried on by an entire new modelling of *the army*, and especially of the royal guards, which, as they then stood, he chooses to allege were fitter to guard a prince to the bar of a high court of justice, than to secure him on the throne (vol. v. p. 404). This Mr. Scott himself is so little able to reconcile with the alleged Whig principles of his author, that he is forced to observe upon it, that it is "daring uncompromising counsel, better suited to the genius of the man who gave it, than to that of the British nation, and most likely, if followed, to have led to a civil war." After this admission, it really is not very easy to understand by what singular stretch of charity the learned editor conceives he may consistently hold, that Swift was always a good Revolution Whig as to politics, and only sided with the Tories—reluctantly, we must suppose, and with great tenderness to his political opponents—out of his over powering zeal for the Church.

While he thus stooped to the dirtiest and most dishonourable part of a partisan's drudgery, it was not to be expected that he should decline any of the mean arts by which a Court party may be maintained. Accordingly, we find him regular in his attendance upon Mrs. Masham, the Queen's favourite; and, after reading the contemptuous notices that occur of her in some of his Whig letters, "as one of the Queen's dressers, who, by great intrigue and flattery, had gained an ascendant over her," it is very edifying to find him writing periodical accounts of the progress of her pregnancy, and "praying God to preserve her life, which is of great importance to this nation," etc. etc.

A connexion thus begun upon an avowed dissatisfaction with the reward of former services, cannot, with consistency, be supposed to have had any thing but self-interest as its foundation: and though Swift's love of power, and especially of the power of wounding, was probably gratified by his exertions in behalf of the triumphant party, no room is left for doubting that these exertions were substantially prompted by a desire to better his own fortune, and that his opinion of the merits of the party depended entirely upon their power and apparent inclination to perform this first of all duties. The thing is spoken out continually in the confidential Journal to Stella; and though he was very angry with Harley for offering him a bank note for fifty pounds, and refused to be his chaplain, this was very plainly because he considered these as no sufficient pay for his services—by no means because he wished them to be received without pay. Very soon after his profession of Toryism, he writes to Stella—"This is the last sally I shall ever make; but *I hope it will turn to some account.* I have done more for these, and I think they are more honest than the last." And a little after—"My new friends are very kind; and I have promises enough. To return without some mark of distinction, would look extremely little; and I *would likewise gladly be somewhat richer than I am.*" At last, he seems to have fairly asked for the see of Hereford (vol. xvi. p. 45.); and when this is refused, he says, "I dined with Lord Treasurer, who chid me for being absent three days. Mighty kind with a p—! Less of civility, and more of interest!" At last, when the state of the *Queen's health* made the duration of the ministry extremely precarious, *and the support* of their friends more essential, he speaks out like a true

Swiss, and tells them that he will run away and leave them, if they do not instantly make a provision for him. In the Journal to Stella, he writes, that having seen the warrants for three deaneries, and none of them for him, he had gone to the Lord Treasurer, and "told him I had nothing to do but to go back to Ireland immediately; for I could not, with any reputation, stay longer here, *unless I had something honourable immediately given to me*. He afterwards told me he had stopped the warrants, and hoped something might be compassed for me," etc. And in the page following we find, that all his love for his dear friend the Lord Treasurer, would not induce him ever to see him again, if he was disappointed in this object of ambition. "The warrants for the deaneries are still stopped, for fear I should be gone. Do you think any thing will be done? In the mean time, I prepare for my journey, and see no great people;—*nor will I see Lord Treasurer any more*, if I go." (Vol. iii. p. 207.) It is under this threat that he extorts the Deanery of St. Patrick's—which he accepts with much grumbling and discontent, and does not enter into possession till all hope of further preferment seems for the time at an end. In this extremity he seems resolved, however, to make the most of it; and finding that the expenses of his induction and the usual payments to government on the occasion come to a considerable sum, he boldly resolves to ask a thousand pounds from the ministers, on the score of his past services, in order to make himself easy. This he announces to Stella soon after the appointment. "I hope in time they will be persuaded *to give me some money* to clear off these debts. They expect I shall pass the next winter here; and *then I will drive them to give me a sum of money*." And a little after—"I shall be sadly cramped, unless the Queen will give me a thousand pounds. I am sure she owes me a great deal more. Lord Treasurer rallies me upon it, and, I am sure, intends it—but *quando?*" And again—"Lord Treasureruses me barbarously. He laughs when I mention a thousand pounds—though a thousand pounds is a very serious thing." It appears, however, that this modest request never was complied with; for, though Bolingbroke got the Queen's warrant for it, to secure Swift's attachment after he had turned out Harley, yet her Majesty's immediate death rendered the gift unavailing.

If any thing were wanting to show that his change of party and his attachment to that which was now uppermost, was wholly founded on personal, and in no degree on public considerations, it would be supplied by the innumerable traits of personal vanity, and the unrestrained expressions of eulogy or abuse, according as that vanity was gratified or thwarted, that are scattered over the whole Journal and Correspondence,—and which are utterly irreconcileable with the conduct of a man who was acting on any principle of dignity or fairness. With all his talent and all his pride, indeed, it appears that Swift exhibited, during this period of favour, as much of the ridiculous airs of a *parvenu*—of a low-bred underling brought suddenly into contact with wealth and splendour, as any of the base understrappers that ever made party disgusting. The studied rudeness and ostentatious arrogance with which he withheld the usual tribute of respect that all well-bred persons pay to rank and office, may be reckoned among the signs of this. But for a fuller picture, we would refer to the Diary of Bishop Kennet, who thus describes the demeanour of this politic partisan in the year 1713.

"*Dr. Swift came into the* coffeehouse, and had a bow from every body

but me. When I came to the antichamber to wait before prayers, Dr. Swift was the principal man of talk and business, and acted as a master of requests. He was soliciting the Earl of Arran to speak to his brother the Duke of Ormond, to get a chaplain's place established in the garrison of Hull for Mr. Fiddes, a clergyman in that neighbourhood, who had lately been in jail, and published sermons to pay fees. He was promising Mr. Thorold to undertake with my Lord-Treasurer, that, according to his petition, he should obtain a salary of 200*l. per annum*, as minister of the English church at Rotterdam. He stopped F. Gwynne, Esq., going in with the red bag to the Queen, and told him aloud he had something to say to him from my Lord-Treasurer. He talked with the son of Dr. Davenant to be sent abroad, and took out his pocket-book, and wrote down several things, as *memoranda*, to do for him. He turned to the fire, and took out his gold watch, and telling the time of the day, complained it was very late. A gentleman said, 'he was too fast.'—'How can I help it,' says the Doctor, 'if the courtiers give me a watch that won't go right?' Then he instructed a young nobleman, that the best poet in England was Mr. Pope (a Papist), who had begun a translation of Homer into English verse, for which 'he must have them all subscribe;'—'for,' says he, 'the author *shall not* begin to print till *I have* a thousand guineas for him.' Lord-Treasurer, after leaving the Queen, came through the room, beckoning Dr. Swift to follow him: both went off *just before prayers*.' "—*Life*, Vol. i. p. 139, 140.

We are very unwilling, in any case, to ascribe to unworthy motives, what may be sufficiently accounted for upon better considerations; but we really have not charity enough to impute Swift's zealous efforts to prevent the rupture between Harley and Bolingbroke, or his continued friendship with both after that rupture took place, to his personal and disinterested affection for these two individuals. In the first place, he had a most manifest interest to prevent their disunion, as that which plainly tended to the entire dissolution of the ministry, and the ruin of the party on which he depended; and, as to his remaining the friend of both after they had become the most rancorous enemies of each other, it must be remembered that they were still respectively the two most eminent individuals with whom he had been connected: and that, if ever that party should be restored to power, from which alone he could now look for preferment, he who stood well with *both* these statesmen would have a double chance of success. Considering, indeed, the facility with which he seems to have cast off friendships far more intimate than the inequality of their condition renders it possible that those of Oxford or Bolingbroke could be with him, whenever party interest interfered with them;—considering the disrespect with which he spoke of Sir William Temple's memory, after he had abjured his principles;—the coarseness with which he calls Lord Somers "a false deceitful rascal," after having designated him as the modern Aristides, for his blameless integrity;—and the unfeeling rancour with which he exposes the personal failings and pecuniary embarrassments of Steele, with whom he had been long so closely united;—it would seem to require something more than the mere personal attachment of a needy pamphleteer to two rival peers, to account for his expressions of affection for both, after one had supplanted the other. The natural solution, indeed, seems to lie sufficiently open.—*After the perfidy* he had shown to the Whig party, and the virulence with *which he had* revenged his own apostasy, there was no possibility of his

being again received by them. His only chance, therefore, was in the restoration of the Tories, and his only policy to keep well with both their great leaders.

Mr. Scott, indeed, chuses to represent him as actuated by a romantic attachment to Lord Oxford, and pronounces an eloquent encomium on his devoted generosity for applying for leave of absence, upon that Nobleman's disgrace, in order to be able to visit him in his retirement. Though he talks of such a visit, however, it is certain that he did not pay it; and that he was all the time engaged in the most friendly correspondence with Bolingbroke, from whom, the very day after he had kicked out his dear friend with the most undisguised anger and contempt, he condescended to receive an order for the thousand pounds he had so long solicited from his predecessor in vain. The following, too, are the terms in which Bolingbroke, at that very time, thought there was no impropriety, and could be no offence, in writing of Oxford, in a private confidential letter to this his dear devoted friend. "Your state of late passages is right enough. I reflect upon them with indignation; and shall never forgive myself for having trusted so long to so much real pride and awkward humility;—to an air of such familiar friendship, and a heart so void of all tenderness;—to such a temper of engrossing business and power, and so perfect an incapacity to manage one, with such a tyrannical disposition to abuse the other," etc. etc. (Vol. xvi, p. 219.) If Swift's feelings for Oxford had borne any resemblance to those which Mr. Scott has imputed to him, it is not conceivable that he should have continued upon a footing of the greatest cordiality with the man who, after supplanting him, could speak in those terms of his fallen rival. Yet Swift's friendship, as they called it, with Bolingbroke, continued as long as that with Oxford; and we find him not only giving him his advice how to act in the government which had now fallen entirely into his hands, but kindly offering, "if his own services may be of any use, to attend him by the beginning of winter." (Id. p. 215.) Those who know of what stuff political friendships are generally made, indeed, will not require even this evidence to prove the hollowness of those in which Swift was now connected. The following passage, in a letter from Lewis, the most intimate and confidential of all his coadjutors, dated only a week or two before Oxford's disgrace, gives a delicious picture, we think, of the whole of those persons for whom the learned Dean was thus professing the most disinterested attachment, and receiving, no doubt, in return, professions not less animated and sincere. It is addressed to Swift in July, 1714.

"I meet with no man or woman, who pretend upon any probable grounds to judge who will carry the great point. Our female friend (Mrs. Masham) told the dragon (Lord Oxford) in her own house, last Thursday morning, these words: 'You never did the Queen any service, nor are you capable of doing her any.' He made no reply, *but supped with her and Mercurialis* (Bolingbroke) *that night at her own house.*—His *revenge is not the less meditated for that.* He tells the words clearly and distinctly to all mankind. *Those who range under his banner, call her ten thousand bitches and kitchen wenches. Those who hate him do the same.* And from my heart, I grieve that she should give such a loose to her passion; for she is susceptible of true friendship, and has many social and domestic virtues. The great attorney (Lord Chancellor Harcourt), who made you the sham offer of the Yorkshire living, had a long conference with the

dragon on Thursday, *kissed him at parting*, and *cursed him at night!*" Vol. xvi. p. 173, 174.

The death of Queen Anne, however, which happened on the 1st of August thereafter, speedily composed all those dissensions, and confounded the victors and the vanquished in one common proscription. Among the most miserable and downcast of all the mourners on that occasion, we confess we were somewhat surprised to find our reverend author. He who, but a few months before, was willing to have hazarded all the horrors of a civil war, for the chance of keeping his party in office, sunk instantly into pitiable and unmanly despondency upon the final disgrace of that party. We are unwilling to believe, and we do not in fact believe, that Swift was privy to the designs of Bolingbroke, Ormond, and Mar, to bring in the Pretender on the Queen's demise, and are even disposed to hold it doubtful whether Oxford concurred in those measures; but we are sure that no man of common firmness could have felt more sorrow and despair, if the country had been conquered by a lawless invader, than this friend of the Act of Settlement did upon the quiet and regular transmission of the sceptre to the appointed heir, and the discomfiture of those ministers who are proved to have traitorously conspired to accomplish a counter revolution, and restore a dynasty which he always affected to consider as justly rejected. How all this sorrow is to be reconciled to the character of a good Revolution Whig, we leave it to the learned editor, who has invested him with that character, to discover. To us it merely affords new evidence of the selfishness and ambition of the individual, and of that utter and almost avowed disregard of the public, which constituted his political character. Of the sorrow and despondency itself, we need produce no proofs,—for they are to be found in every page of his subsequent writings. His whole life, indeed, after this event, was one long fit of spleen and lamentation, and, to the very end of his days, he never ceases bewailing the irreparable and grievous calamity which the world had suffered in the death of that most imbecile princess. He speaks of it, in short, throughout, as a pious divine might be supposed to speak of the fall of primeval man from the state of innocence. The sun seems darkened for ever in his eyes, and mankind to be degenerated beyond the toleration of one who was cursed with the remembrance of their former dignity! And all this for what?—because the government was, with the full assent of the nation, restored to the hands of those whose talents and integrity he had once been proud to celebrate—or rather, because it was taken from those who would have attempted, at the evident risk of a civil war, to defeat that solemn settlement of which *he* had always approved, and in virtue of which alone the late Sovereign had succeeded;—because the liberties of the nation were again to be secured in peace, under the same councils which had carried its glories so high in war—and the true friends of the Revolution of 1688 to succeed to that patronage which had previously been exercised by its virtual enemies! Such were the public calamities which he had to lament as a patriot;—and the violence done to his political attachments seems to have been of the same character. His two friends were Bolingbroke and Oxford: and both these had been abusing each other, and endeavouring to supplant each other, with all their might, for a long period of time;—and, at last, one of them did this good office to the other, in the most insulting and malignant manner he could devise: And yet the worthy Dean had charity *enough* to love them both just as dearly as ever. He was always a zealous

advocate, too, for the Act of Settlement; and has in twenty places expressed his abomination of all who could allow themselves to think of the guilt of calling in the Pretender. If, therefore, he could love and honour and flatter Bolingbroke, who not only turned out his beloved Oxford, but actually went over to the Pretender, it is not easy to see why he should have been so implacable towards those older friends of his, who only turned out Bolingbroke, in order to prevent the Pretender from being brought in. On public grounds, in short, there is nothing to be said for him;—nor can his conduct or feelings ever receive any explanation upon such principles. But every thing becomes plain and consistent when we look to another quarter—when we consider, that by the extinction of the Tory party, his hopes of preferment were also extinguished, and that he was no longer to enjoy the dearer delight of bustling in the front of a triumphant party—of inhaling the incense of adulation from its servile dependants—and of insulting with impunity the principles and the benefactors he had himself deserted.

That this was the true key to his feelings, on this and on every other occasion, may be concluded indeed with safety, not only from his former, but from his after life. His Irish politics may all be referred to one principle—a desire to insult and embarrass the government by which he was neglected, and with which he despaired of being reconciled:—A single fact is decisive upon this point. While his friends were in power, we hear nothing of the grievances of Ireland; and to the last we hear nothing of its radical grievance, the oppression of its Catholic population. His object was, not to do good to Ireland, but to vex and annoy the English ministry. To do this however with effect, it was necessary that he should speak to the interests and the feelings of some party who possessed a certain degree of power and influence. This unfortunately was not the case in that day with the Catholics; and though this gave them only a stronger title to the services of a truly brave or generous advocate, it was sufficient to silence Swift. They are not so much as named above two or three times in his writings—and then only with scorn and reprobation. In the topics which he does take up, it is no doubt true, that he frequently inveighs against real oppressions and acts of indisputable impolicy; yet it is no want of charity to say, that it is quite manifest that this was not his motive for bringing them forward, and that he had just as little scruple to make an outcry, where no public interest was concerned, as where it was apparent. It was sufficient for him, that the subject was likely to excite popular prejudice and clamour,—or that he had some personal pique or animosity to gratify. The Drapier's Letters are a sufficient proof of the influence of the former principle; and the Legion Club, and the numberless brutalities against Tighe and Bettesworth, of the latter. Every body is now satisfied of the perfect harmlessness, and indeed of the great utility of Wood's scheme for a new copper coinage; and the only pretexts for the other scurrilities to which we have alluded were, that the Parliament had shown a disposition to interfere for the alleviation, in some inconsiderable particulars, of the intolerable oppression of the tithe system,—to the detriment, as Swift imagined, of the order to which he himself belonged; and that Mr. Tighe had obtained for a friend of his own, a living which Swift had wished to secure for one of his dependants.

His main object in all this, we make no doubt, was personal pique and vengeance;—yet it is probable, that there was occasionally, or throughout, an expectation of being again brought into the paths of power and prefer-

ment, by the notoriety which these publications enabled him to maintain, and by the motives which they held out to each successive ministry, to secure so efficient a pen in their favour. That he was willing to have made his peace with Walpole, even during the reign of George I., is admitted by Mr. Scott,—though he discredits the details which Lord Chesterfield and others have given, apparently from very direct authority, of the humiliating terms upon which he was willing to accede to the alliance:—and it is certain, that he paid his court most assiduously to the successor of that Prince, both while he was Prince of Wales, and after his accession to the throne. The manner in which he paid his court, too, was truly debasing, and especially unworthy of a High-Churchman and a public satirist. It was chiefly by flatteries and assiduity to his mistress, Mrs. Howard, with whom he maintained a close correspondence, and upon whom he always professed mainly to rely for advancement. When George I. died, Swift was among the first to kiss the hands of the new Sovereign, and indulged anew in the golden dreams of preferment. Walpole's recall to power, however, soon overcast those visions; and he then wrote to the mistress, humbly and earnestly entreating her, to tell him sincerely what were his chances of success. She flattered him for a while with hopes; but at last he discovered that the prejudice against him was too strong to be overcome, and ran back in terrible humour to Ireland, where he railed ever after with his usual vehemence against the King, the Queen, and the favourite. The truth, it seems, was, that the latter was disposed to favour him, but that her influence with the King was subordinate to that of the Queen, who made it a principle to thwart all applications which were made through that channel.

Such, we think, is a faithful sketch of the political career of this celebrated person;—and if it be correct in the main, or even in any material particulars, we humbly conceive that a more unprincipled and base course of proceeding never was held up to the contempt and abhorrence of mankind. To the errors and even the inconsistencies of honest minds, we hope we shall always be sufficiently indulgent, and especially to such errors in practical life as are incident to literary and ingenious men. For Swift, however, there is no such apology. His profession, through life, was much more that of a politician than of a clergyman or an author. He was not led away in any degree by heated fancy, or partial affection—by deluding visions of impossible improvements, or excessive indignation at incurable vices. He followed, from first to last, the eager, but steady impulse of personal ambition and personal animosity; and in the dirty and devious career into which they impelled him, he never spared the character or the feelings of a single individual who appeared to stand in his way. In no respect, therefore, can he have any claim to lenity;—and now, when his faults are of importance only as they may serve the purpose of warning or misleading to others, we consider it as our indispensable duty to point them out in their true colours, and to show that, even when united to talents as distinguished as his, political profligacy and political rancour must lead to universal distrust and avoidance during the life of the individual, and to contempt and infamy thereafter.*

* The Reviewer proceeds to delineate Swift's private character, supporting his opinions by quotations from the Dean's letters. This part of the Criticism, though exceedingly interesting, I have omitted, in consequence of its extreme length. See pages of the E. Review, No. 53, from *26 to 44.*

PITT.*

'e are not sufficiently removed by time from the extraordinary person
e life forms the subject of this work, to attempt an estimate of his merits
any great confidence in its impartiality. The scenes in which he acted
nspicuous a part are indeed fast vanishing from the view,—thrown by
s into the shade, rather than obscured by distance: but many still
in who profess to be his successors, and who were, in some respects,
sociates, though in very humble characters. Their claims to notice,
are well aware, rest entirely on their connexion with him; and they
accordingly used his name as a rallying point to collect men who have
inciples in common, nor any bond of union—except inherent simila-
f pursuit, and the accidental circumstance of having once served toge-
nder him. It becomes difficult, therefore, to speak of Mr. Pitt without
rence to the policy and the politicians of the present day; and, even if
all succeed in estimating his claims to the gratitude of the country
perfect freedom from any bias, it is very certain that no party will give
dit for such impartiality. The circumstances which make it so hard
e writer to be unprejudiced, render it quite impossible that he should
generation of candid readers; and he is far more likely to displease
sses, that to satisfy any. With this deep sense of the difficulties of
sk we have undertaken, we should probably have been tempted to
on it as hopeless, were there not some encouragement in the reflection,
ftertimes may be aided in forming their more calm judgment, even
e conflict of opposite doctrines in the present day; when, if placed too
he subject for correctness of opinions, we are certainly better situated
curate knowledge of the facts.

entering upon this most debatable subject, we are naturally anxious
l, if possible, some point from which debate may be excluded—some
—or at least some scarcely deniable postulate on which to build our
usions: and this, it appears, will be found, if at all, rather in con-
ng Mr. Pitt's different merits with each other, than in comparing
with his rivals or his predecessors. Thus it is undeniable, we think,
e was far more excellent as a Debater than as a Statesman. Whe-
or not he had superiors in eloquence among his contemporaries; how
e fell short of the exquisite models of ancient oratory; what portion
s rhetorical fame he owed to the accidental circumstance of Place, or
ardly less trivial merit of voice; in what proportions a careful analysis
d lead us to distribute our admiration between the Parliamentary
ian and the Orator; and whether we are entitled to extol his genius
ly his abilities in this kind—are questions that may divide men's opi-
s; as they will also be inclined to dispute upon the skill, the integrity,
he tendency of his measures. But we believe it may with all safety
firmed, that, even in the present times, no difference of opinion worth
ioning prevails respecting the vast superiority of the Speaker to the
ster. Hardly any two rational men could be found to dispute what
Mr. Pitt's distinguishing excellence—his *forte*. Upon this, friend and
vill at once join: and point to him in his place as a first-rate Parlia-
tary leader: and probably, taking all the qualities together that go to

* *Tomline's Life of William Pitt.*—Vol. xxxv. page 437. July, 1821.

form the character,—eloquence—address—decision—discretion—he v
the greatest ever produced in this, the only country where such a cl
racter is known. It is indeed marvellous to look back and observe h
large a space he fills in the capacity of a debater, and into how narro
compass his measures have already shrunk. But a little reflection ea
explains the diversity. He was hurried into public life prematurely; a
though an orator may be forced, a ruler must grow. A young ma
talents, whose studies have been sedulously pursued, may, at a very e
age, attain all the accomplishments which enable natural genius to
the direction of eloquence. No great experience is required to mould
into the shape that suits any given assembly. Little more is wantin
carry him thus far, than can be learnt from books; but a very diffe
study, and far longer experience, is necessary to make even the mos
gacious person an able councillor in difficult emergencies; and it ca
be doubted, that the discipline requisite for this purpose is mater
interrupted by the war of words, the habit which it begets of regar
every thing as a matter of discussion, and the tendency which it
courages to act with a view to the defence of measures, rather than
success.

It is probable, that a much greater variety of opinion will be fo
upon the character of his eloquence, than upon the superiority of
talents as a Parliamentary leader. Upon his own greater excellenc
that than in any other capacity, there can exist little doubt. But it
not follow, either that he was the first orator of his age, or that ora
properly so called, was his own highest merit. His eloquence was
kind peculiarly adapted to the situation which he filled so long: he
stately and dignified in manner; clear and distinct in unravelling the d
of the most complicated subject; declamatory at once and argumenta
so as to furnish the best pretexts to those who wished to follow him, v
he cheered and encouraged those who might be in dread of his adversa
but, above all, he excelled in the use of both topics and language w
view to produce the effect he desired, and never commit himself; he c
balance his expressions so nicely—conceal or bring forward parts o
subject so artistly—approach, and yet shun dangerous points so dexter
—often seeming to say so much while he told so little, and almost al
filling the ear more than the mind, and frequently leaving it doubtful
reflection, what had in substance been carried away—that a celebrated
temporary was scarcely chargeable with exaggeration * in saying, that
verily believed Mr. Pitt could *speak a King's Speech off hand.*" †

To these qualities, so eminently fitting him for a Ministerial orato
added others of a higher description. His fluency of language was a
preternatural, and yet it never grew tiresome; for though it seldom
to any great beauty, yet it was generally characteristic and appropriate
from time to time it did contain expressions of more than ordinary fel
if, at its common level, it too much resembled the diction of a State-p
He was rather loud and vehement than impassioned; and appear
declaim more from the head than the heart: but then he reasoned cl
and arranged both quickly and accurately; or at least he seemed
always arguing and distinguishing, and to address the understanding r
than the passions, over which he hardly had any other control than

* *Mr. Windham.*

† *See Appendix*, No. I. at the end of this volume.

ch subjects the nerves of an audience to a sonorous and most powerful
e, itself under strict discipline. In one part of eloquence, and only in
could he be deemed an orator of the highest genius. His sarcasm
at once keen and splendid; it was brilliant, and it was concise. In
est of his speaking he resembled the Italian prose writers. In this he
nearer Dante; and could dispose of an adversary by a sentence or a
e phrase; or, without stepping aside, get rid of him in a parenthesis,
then go forward to his object,—thus increasing the contemptuousness
e expression by its brevity and indifference, as if his victim had been
significant to give any trouble.

viewing the opposite side of the picture, we must distinguish
een defects and faults. That he had very little fancy, and no pathos;
his language was not pointed or epigrammatic; that his wit was never
ul, and seldom aided his argument, being pointed towards his an-
ist, and not his subject, is undeniable. But nearly the same defi-
ies are to be found (except the last) in the greatest orator of ancient
, and are reckoned rather peculiarities which characterize, than im-
ctions which detract from, his prodigious merit. But Mr. Pitt's
n was not of the highest or the purest kind; it was neither learned
natural; and his style was extremely wordy. He could not arrive
short and simple path at his point; he did not go by the straight
he did not say the thing at once, but spoke about it, and about
d rounded off sentences which sometimes touched it, but at others
came near it. In throwing out finished periods, he had indeed a
erful facility; and the listener could hardly conceive how any one
d produce such composition at the call of the moment. But much of
erit consisted in this feat; and the same sentences, if written, would
excited no admiration as mere composition. It is a fault of more
tance, that he rarely took an original or commanding, or even an
ious view of a subject. But for a classical quotation, or an allusion to
part of English history, which now and then occurred, he might never
read any thing beyond the Parliamentary debates and papers upon the
; nor did it seem as if the train of his thoughts ever led him beyond
subjects of contemplation. Though singularly distinct in the expo-
of facts, and equally clear and extremely skilful in stating the terms
uestion, his powers of reasoning at close quarters were by no means
guished; and though he always charmed the hearer, he seldom over-
red him with that resistless torrent which makes the speaker and the
h be forgotten in the subject.

. Fox's great superiority lay in the fulness of his matter; the large and
al views which he took; the ingenuity of his illustrations; the flow of
ul wit which always made a part, and often the most effectual part of
gument; the admirable closeness of his reasoning, and the vehemence
which he poured forth his whole feelings, as well as his thoughts;—
his abundance of matter it was that overcame all defects of voice and
er, and made his habitual carelessness, and hesitation of speech in
passages, only give the advantages of contrast to others, and relief
r than injury to the whole. It is most worthy however of remark,
as in their character and conduct, so in their eloquence, neither of
great men had any faults of a mean or paltry kind. They spoke not
e sake of display, but to gain some important object; and their taste
nothing *puerile or affected*. Hence perhaps it is, that they both rather

avoided than wanted the epigrammatic point so common in other orators, and which, though a beauty certainly in style, as well a help to argument, when moderately used, is very apt to overrun the composition, and usurp the place of more grand and simple excellences. This, however, may justly be deemed an ornament more suited to the artificial manner of Mr. Pitt, and rather to have been expected in him than in his illustrious antagonist, to whose extreme simplicity it appears abhorrent. They were both thoroughly imbued with the spirit of ancient eloquence, having drunk deeply at its perennial fountains; and if they only profited by the refinement of taste which is derived from an intimate acquaintance with poets and rhetoricians of antiquity, and did not, especially Mr. Fox, form themselves upon the model of the Greek or Roman orators, we should rather admire this as an additional proof of their original excellence, than question their profound and accurate learning, or doubt their having fully appreciated the transcendent merits of the fathers of the art; well assured that they can only be imitated by speaking, not as they spoke in their own day, but as they would have spoken in ours.

It is not to be doubted that Mr. Pitt, though from the first fitted for his station by habits of composure, method, self-command, fluency of speech, quickness in seizing, and dexterity in pursuing an advantage, was, by its continued duties and manifold facilities, prodigiously improved in those official qualities; while Mr. Fox's defects as a leader might principally be traced to his long exclusion from power, and to the openness and warmth of his temper. We are not here alluding to the personal influence of the two men; for, in that particular, there is no comparison; no statesman, without patronage at home, and power abroad, ever possessed any thing like the individual authority which Mr. Fox had during the last twenty years of his life, both in his own country and among foreign States. But we speak merely of the skill and management in debate which Mr. Pitt had acquired beyond any other party chief; and he certainly owed it, in a great degree, to his long experience as a minister, as well as to his natural talents, and the coolness, not to say coldness, of his temperament. When his situation was changed, he was not so versatile as his adversary; and the all-powerful defender of measures proved by no means so formidable an assailant. A little more practice would probably have removed this inequality; but the talents of an opposition leader he made little account of, and would never give himself time to acquire. Had he chosen to remain out of place, we might soon have said of him, as we now do of Mr. Fox—"Lateribus pugnans, incitans animos; acer, acerbus, criminosus;"—while on the other hand, perhaps, a length of ministerial habits might have transferred to the latter some of the peculiarities of his adversary, and enabled us to say of him—"Erat in verbis gravitas, et facile dicebat, et auctoritatem naturalem quandam habebat oratio." (*Brutus*, 62.)

In passing from the Orator to the Statesman, we may remark, that though a much greater diversity of opinion may be expected, yet there can be little hesitation with regard to the fundamental objection which is applicable to his whole conduct; the want of those great and commanding views of policy, boldly formed, and steadily pursued, whereby a vast and original genius for state affairs is evinced. Mr. Pitt never went before his age; he rather lagged behind it; and we shall in vain look to the history of his *administration* for traces of a master mind. He seems to have taken his *principles from* others, and only busied himself with contriving or arranging

the details, and presenting the results in a plausible form to the public. Nineteen years in power such as no minister of this country ever before possessed; nearly half the time in profound peace, and in as great favour with the People as with the Court—how could a man of genius leave so little to claim the gratitude, or even arrest the attention, of posterity? It seems impossible to avoid concluding, either that his talents were unequal to such high exertions, or that they lay in another direction. It seems as if he had rather been employing all his faculties in preserving the power he so prematurely acquired, than seeking to use that power for the benefit of mankind, and the illustration of his name in after ages. Nor did he, generally speaking, attempt the accomplishment of his plans, whatever might be their merits, with that disregard of consequences to his own power, which alone commands success, and alone deserves it; distinguishing the lofty ambition of a patriot statesman from the buoyancy of a courtly intriguer.

The admirers of Mr. Pitt's conduct are apt to take their stand, first of all, upon his Financial measures. Nor can it be denied that there is here somewhat to commend; for he introduced a variety of improvements in the collection of the Revenue; he simplified exceedingly the management of the permanent branches of it; and he showed, for once in the history of taxation, that the produce of an impost may be increased by diminishing its amount. But what a minute proportion do these, his very earliest measures, bear to the whole course of his financial administration, which, in almost every other part, was a series of mistakes or of popular delusions! Leaving out of view, for the present, that system of wasteful extravagance, the only systematic scheme of which he is the author, and the portion of his policy which his successors have the most scrupulously followed; supposing that all the immense expenditure by which he has crushed down the country was necessary; and that the only question was, whether the best means were adopted to provide for it—we shall vainly seek, in any other age or nation, for specimens of taxes more flagrantly violating every sound principle, or of expedients for raising money more improvident, and even pernicious, than those presented by the course of shifts and devices which he employed to carry on the War with France.

For some years he went on, chiefly by increasing the old duties, and without any selection as to their pressure, either upon the poorer classes, or upon that fund which alone forms the legitimate source of all revenue, the produce of capital and labour. Those which he raised highest fell upon the necessaries of life, as the Salt-duties, which he began by doubling; or upon the transference of property, and, we may add, upon distress and embarrassment, as the Stamp-duties; or upon commercial intercourse, as the duties on tolls and carriage of parcels,—which indeed he was forced to abandon immediately, but only from finding it impossible to collect them. The taxes which he added to those handed down to him by his predecessors, were among the worst that can be imagined. Some of them fell at once upon capital, as the Legacy-tax; others, upon necessaries and labour, even more directly than such impolitic imposts usually do—for example, the duty on candles. Then he relied, at one time, upon a renewal of the Bank Monopoly, twelve years before it expired; at another, upon obtaining from the East India Company sums which it could not pay without getting as much back *in some other* shape immediately after. One year, his resource was *to beg voluntary* donations from those whom he had alarmed

with the fears of Revolution and invasion; and the next, he would ope loan, which the loyal portion of the community were first extolled to skies for taking with all its risks, and then indemnified when it becam losing concern. Shifts and expedients appearing to be exhausted, he th professed to bring forward a new system of finance, upon solid principl —and it turned out to be the clumsy and cruel plan of trebling at once old assessments. This *invention* was to produce seven millions, at lowest, and after making the most ample allowance for evasions and ot deficiencies,—eight being the sum he really expected, but only four an half were raised. At length came the most desperate resource of unskil financiers, when all fair ways and means fail—a direct tax upon incon which was to cover every deficit, with a revenue of ten millions, and bei so contrived as to be at once oppressive and unproductive, yielded in hands little more than half the sum; though his successors, with somewh more of ingenuity and contrivance, made it the most gainful as well as i tolerable duty known in modern times.

Amongst all these expedients to raise money, and prop for a season t credit of the country, not once did he ever seem to reflect on the gr revenue, and still greater security to be derived from economy. His reform many of which deserve high commendation, and proved effectual ev beyond his hopes, were all in the collection of the taxes, never in the e penditure. He could not face the clamour of reduced placemen and fair paid contractors; nor durst he, with the country in his favour, and th Court dependent upon his support, through the influence of real or fanci dangers, ever place among his ways and means such retrenchments might relieve the nation's burthens at the expense of the Crown's patronag His reforms in the Revenue departments were, indeed, attended with large increase of direct influence to the Treasury, which, under his adm nistration, monopolized the patronage of the Boards. But it must be ad that he left to his successors the discovery of a right in those Boards to co pensation for this loss. With all his extravagance, and his facility towar jobbers, the author of the Bonus to the Loyalty Loan contractors could n strike out any thing to match those who have since increased the salari of public servants, as a compensation for patronage transferred to th Government.

But the measures of finance by which Mr. Pitt will be the longest remem bered, are the Sinking Fund and Depreciation of the Currency. Th former was his favourite measure; he gloried in having raised a colum support public credit for ever; a column, upon which he desired that h name might be inscribed as the only reward of all his labours. It see now pretty manifest, that this remuneration will not be very ample; h during his life, and for some years after, the opinions of men were v generally in favour of the Sinking Fund. That the plan was not origin devised by him, but adopted from Dr. Price's calculations, we account v little detraction from his merit; for assuredly the step is great whic statesman makes, when he embodies the ideas of ingenious and speculat men in a substantive measure, and carries it into execution. Nor does seem possible to have arranged the details better than he did, or to ha given more effect to the scheme in its practical operation. But no one wh *considers the* question, now entertains a doubt that a Sinking Fund, duri *war at least*, while new loans are contracting, is arithmetically absurd; a *that a large* actual loss has been incurred by the country from adhering

the plan in those circumstances. An objection exists, too, of a more radical nature, and applicable to such a plan even in time of peace, at least where the sums yearly raised to support the fund are considerable. The capital accumulates at compound interest only, when in the hands of the Government, doubling in fourteen years. But if left in the hands of private persons, its accumulation would be far more rapid; and, by increasing the income of the community, would enable a skilful government to augment the revenue, or pay off the debt more expeditiously, and with less burthen to the people. It can hardly be questioned, then, that the renown anticipated by Mr. Pitt from this achievement, will be of a very doubtful character in after ages, if indeed the structure which records it should have any considerable duration. The other great measure for saving the country and securing its credit, the Stoppage of the Bank and Depreciation of our Currency, has already been the fruitful source of incalculable misfortunes, and, followed by the restoration of that currency in a moment of general delusion, promises to prove at all events as *lasting* a monument as any statesman ever raised to perpetuate his name.

Educated as Mr. Pitt was in the doctrine of the most improved economical systems, and possessed of enlarged and liberal views upon all subjects, it was impossible that he should fall into the gross errors of his narrow-minded predecessors, in matters of commercial policy; and where his financial operations ran counter to the true interests of trade, we must not impute the error to ignorance. He knew better than he could venture to act,—placed as he was in the necessity of obtaining money at all hazards, and averse to alarm those domestic powers on whose support he chose far too implicitly to rest his official existence.

But if a lavish expenditure, ever driving him to shifts, was the vice of his internal administration, the cause of his extravagance lay in those errors in his foreign policy, about which there can hardly be two opinions. As a leading statesman in the close of the eighteenth century, he must be judged by his conduct with respect to the French Revolution, and the wars which it occasioned. His capital mistake in relation to both, was the never forming a clear and decided plan of operations, consistent in itself, and pointing to some definite and attainable object. He met the Revolution at first with an indifferent, if not a friendly disposition; and when, as his adherents say, from its aspect being changed, or, as his adversaries assert, from the temptation of dividing them, and securing the favour of the court, he became hostile to France and her revolutionary government, he carried on his operations so as to ensure their failure,—because he never attacked the new order of things with the force derived from an alliance with the old, and because he made war upon her by a multitude of detailed and insignificant operations, in which success was unavailing and defeat fatal, instead of attempting to strike some one great and decisive blow. He thus reaped all the disadvantages of every plan in combating the Revolution—opposed by the energies of the country, as if he had been fighting under the White flag and the Lilies; distrusted by the royalists, as if he had borne the tri-coloured cockade; exhausting the resources of Europe, as if he had embodied all her powers at once in general array; and sacrificing her by piecemeal to the undivided strength and rapacious ambition of the enemy, as if each had fought single-handed, and the want of unity could not be supplied by concert.

Equally inconsistent *and devoid* of all intelligible principle, was the

course of his negotiations. He went to war without any conceivable justification, except distrust of the revolutionary government, and alarm lest its neighbourhood should prove fatal to our internal tranquillity; and yet be thrice treated for peace with that same revolutionary government, at a time when its form was so fluctuating, that it changed during one of the negotiations. After passing through various stages, an alteration took place which promised a degree of stability unknown since the destruction of the old dynasty; but with the chief who had been placed at the head of the new system, he indignantly refused to hold communion, upon objections of a personal nature; as if the relations of peace could be safely formed with the five Directors who happened at the moment to bear sway, and of whom little or nothing was known, while all intercourse was impossible with a single person in firm possession of the supreme civil and military authority in the State. The past conduct of this extraordinary man was the principal ground of rejecting his proposals. Yet in about one year afterwards, Mr. Pitt supported the policy of those who willingly treated with the same individual; though he had certainly not changed his nature in the interval, but only made himself more formidable and less easy to deal with, by extending his power at home, and humbling his enemies abroad. In a year after this treaty was concluded, the ministers began to be afraid of what they had done; and Mr. Pitt, once more discovering that there was no safety but in war, hurried them on to break the peace, and to sacrifice whatever remained of independence in Europe.

If Mr. Burke had conducted the affairs of England in those days, at least there would have been an intelligible course pursued in negotiation and in war; he would only have treated with the ancient government of France. He would have opposed the new system as such, backed by the Royalist party, or rather aiding them in attacking the revolutionary order of things, and not seizing the opportunity of taking a few ships and sugar islands. He would alike have refused to negotiate with the Committee of Public Safety, the Directory, and the Consuls; and, far from deeming the extension of the enemy's power a reason for seeking peace at his hands, would have shown greater aversion to his advances when covered with laurels, than when only polluted with crimes. If Mr. Fox had swayed the councils of the country, he might perhaps have taken the same course as Mr. Burke; but it is far more likely that he would have abstained from all interference with the internal affairs of France—shown a friendly disposition towards the people—and cautiously, but inoffensively kept aloof from their rulers, neither courting their friendship nor provoking their enmity, though ready at all times to check the least encroachment upon our rights, and to resent any invasion of the territory of our allies. Mr. Pitt, however, followed neither of these courses; but resorted to half measures, as if he had never looked the subject full in the face, and were undecided how to view it. He could neither remain quietly at peace, nor vigorously and strenuously urge the war; he seemed by turns to partake of all the opinions held by conflicting politicians, to take a little out of each system, and to pursue one line until he received a check which threw him upon the opposite course.

His adherents indeed contend, that, after all, his policy was successful; and would fain ascribe to it the unexpected turn of Continental affairs after *the Moscow* campaign. If asked, however, what they mean by his policy, *the only answer is*, that he kept up the spirit of resistance to France which

n the end led to her discomfiture, and opposed the Revolutionary govern-ent which has now been overthrown. But the facts unfortunately preclude ll such assumptions in Mr. Pitt's favour; and entirely disconnect him with e changes which have recently taken place. He thrice treated with the mains of the Jacobins, and once with Bonaparte; whose insane ambition was that hurried on the ruin of his dynasty, and created the counter-volution. The inferior race of politicians who succeeded to Mr. Pitt, ally carried on the war upon far sounder principles, and, for the first me, made the attack in the right place, and with the requisite force; they re led on by degrees to do so; and even they, superior as their policy s to his, through the accidents of the times, would in vain have expended e blood and treasure of the country, had not those unlooked-for events me to their aid, to which every man of common discernment traces the ue of the war. But for those chances, their extravagance would have en as entirely fruitless (to compare great things with small) as the cost of e Caledonian Canal was before the lucky invention of the steam-boat.

Let it not be imagined that they who hold this opinion of Mr. Pitt's licy, foreign and financial, during the Wars of the Revolution, neces-rily deny his talents as a statesman in ordinary times. The difficulties his situation were of a nature wholly unparalleled in history: a person great steadiness might well have faltered in his course through such a sea troubles; and the resources of a very fertile mind might have easily en exhausted by the strange and novel exigencies of the crisis. Nor have e a right severely to blame him who met this demand, rather by extra-dinary devices than happy ones. A minister may well be deemed able, hom we must allow to have been unequal to such novel emergencies; d much of greatness may be attached to the name of Mr. Pitt, while e are compelled wholly to reject the extravagant praises which his llowers have lavished upon him. In the policy which he pursued ring the more ordinary times which preceded the Revolution, far less ppears to censure; and, with the exception of the Russian armament d negotiation, his conduct in relation to foreign powers was firm, con-stent, and prosperous. The able and successful measures adopted in e affairs of Holland gained the unqualified approbation of all parties, d the French Commercial Treaty was never impeached with any effect.

Hitherto, we have almost wholly confined our attention to the talents d wisdom of this distinguished person; his claim to the higher praise of olitical Integrity will be the subject of far more disputation. All men vill readily admit, that there was nothing petty or sordid in his character, t least in the worst sense of the terms; but it can hardly be denied, that he flights of a generous ambition are considerably lowered when it stoops o take or to keep mere office with crippled power, by the surrender of opi-nions upon important points. We pass over Mr. Pitt's change of sentiments pon Parliamentary Reform, and shall admit it to have been sincere when he Revolutionary alarm had begun to spread. But how many years did he continue in power before 1791, without exerting himself in favour of measure which he still deemed essential to the public safety, half so vigo-rously as he constantly did for the most paltry Government measures? A speech or two, indeed, he delivered during that period, re-asserting the doctrines which he had maintained while in opposition; but he appears in no one instance to have exerted the influence of Government for the pur-pose *of giving effect to his opinions*. In short, he may have been sincere,

—but he was not zealous; and to hold opinions such as his on so great a question, with indifference, seems hardly consistent with our ideas of perfect purity, more especially when it is borne in mind that the courtiers were against him, and a loss of place might have been the effect of indiscreet ardour. The same remark applies to the Abolition of the Slave Trade, which it clearly appears he might have carried many years before his death, with perfect ease, had he chosen to make it a Cabinet Question. To no *speaker* is that important subject more indebted; to no *minister* so little: And then, with his feelings on the detested traffic, so loudly expressed during ten years, to double its amount at once for the sake of capturing some pestilent territory, where a word from the Executive could have excluded it without any interposition of Parliament, truly strikes the calm observer of these times with astonishment and dismay. In one respect, indeed, he was a far kinder friend to the Abolition than to Reform; for he never joined in persecuting the disciples of the former doctrine; whereas he had no sooner received a new light upon the latter, than he was found leagued with the men who proscribed Reformers, and endeavoured to treat them as rebels.

His resignation in 1801, upon the ground that the Catholic Question could not be carried, reflects great honour upon his memory; but this is materially tarnished by his consenting, three years after, to resume his place without any stipulation in its favour: although few men can now doubt that, had he remained firm with Lord Grenville and Mr. Fox, the intolerant faction which had possession of the Court must needs have yielded; and fewer can deny, that the paramount importance of such a question demanded from Mr. Pitt's consistency, as well as his patriotism, the sacrifice of all party and personal views. The course which he preferred proved, in the result, as unfortunate for his own interest as for that of his country. He formed an administration so weak in all its parts, that he transacted the whole business of Government himself; and to give it numerical strength in Parliament, he was forced to unite with the fragments of those whom he had displaced, in a manner sufficiently indicative of his contempt. His ill-fated schemes of a fourth coalition, far exceeding all the rest in crudeness and in costliness, produced results proportionably more ruinous to England and to Europe; and he died at a time when, having failed in all his plans, and deserved his failures in most of them, his partial admirers could, with confidence, point to the Irish Union, alone of all his various projects, as equally entitled to the applause of his own age and the gratitude of posterity.

It is a very common thing, in discussing the merits of statesmen, to make a distinction between their public and private character; but, in an enlarged sense, no real difference of this kind can be admitted. He who can do an unworthy act for the sake of power, would do the same for pelf,—if he happened to feel the want of it, or to place as high a value upon it; and that he reserves the practice of base arts for the gratification of his ambition alone, proves his estimate of the object to vary rather than his scrupulousness about the means. Subject to this remark, we must allow Mr. Pitt's private character to have been unimpeachable, in the ordinary sense of the term. The correctness of his demeanour, no doubt, proceeded in a good degree from physical temperament. Convivial pleasures were the only ones he indulged in; and this is certainly the foundation of his reputation for strict *moral conduct*. It is true that he fulfilled all the private relations of life in

nner the most exemplary, and that no man was ever more beloved ıe circle of his friends. But this may, with perfectly equal truth, be med of his illustrious antagonist, whom, nevertheless, it has always ı the practice to contrast with him in respect of strict morality; while only difference appears pretty clearly to have arisen from natural cold–, aided by the early and confirmed habits of an official life.*

DR. LAURENCE AND EDMUND BURKE. †

r. Laurence was one of the most singularly endowed men, in some ects, that ever appeared in public life. He united in himself the inde–able labour of a Dutch Commentator, with the alternate playfulness sharpness of a Parisian Wit. His general information was boundless; powers of mastering a given subject, were not to be resisted by any ee of dryness or complication in its details; and his fancy was lively ıgh to shed light upon the darkest, and to strew flowers round the most en tracks of inquiry, had it been suffered to play easily and vent itself ly. But, unfortunately, he had only the conception of the Wit, with execution of the Commentator; it was not Scarron or Voltaire speaking ɔciety, or Mirabeau in public, from the stores of Erasmus or of Bayle; it was Hemsterhuysius emerging into polished life, with the dust of ıy libraries upon him, to make the circle gay; it was Grævius entering Senate with somewhere from one–half to two thirds of his forthcoming) at his fingers' ends, to awaken the flagging attention, and strike ani–ion into the lazy debate. He might have spoken with the wit of Voltaire the humour of Scarron united; none of it could pierce through the ber of his solid matter; and any spark that by chance found its way, stifled by the still more uncouth manner. As an author, he had no ı defects; his profuse stores of knowledge, his business-like habit of ap–ng them to the point; his taste, generally speaking correct, because inally formed on the models of antiquity, and only relaxed by his ıiration of Mr. Burke's less severe beauties; all gave him a facility of ling, both copiously and nervously, upon serious subjects; while his could display itself upon lighter ones unincumbered by pedantry, and bstructed by the very worst delivery ever witnessed,—a delivery calcu–d to alienate the mind of the hearer, to beguile him of his attention, but by ling it away from the speaker, and almost to prevent him from compre–ding what was so spoken. It was in reference to this unvarying effect of ːtor Laurence's delivery, that Mr. Fox once said, a man should attend, if ɜible, to a speech of his, and then speak it over again himself; it must, he ceived, succeed infallibly, for it was sure to be admirable in itself, and ːertain of being new to the audience. But in this saying there was con–

Those who wish to peruse one of the most plausible and eloquent defences ever published of Pitt's character as a Statesman and an Orator, should consult the 4th Vol. of the *Quarterly ıiew*, page 207. The Article in which the sketch appears is written with uncommon force and ity, though, as may be inferred from the political principles of that Journal, the writer professes ee nothing reprehensible in the public measures of the distinguished object of his impressive ıegyric.

† Epistolary Correspondence of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke and Dr. French Lau–ce.—Vol. xlvi. page 269. October, 1827.

siderably more wit than truth. The Doctor's speech was sure to *materials* not for one, but for half a dozen speeches; and a perso with great advantage listen to it, in order to use those materials, afterwards; as indeed many did both in Parliament and at the Bar he practised, make an effort to attend to him, how difficult soever, in hear all that could be said upon every part of the question. But who so, was sure to hear a vast deal that was useless, and could serve no but to perplex and fatigue; and he was equally sure to hear the imp points treated with as much vehemence, and as minutely dwelt upo great and commanding features of the subject. In short, the Comm was here again displayed, who never can perceive the different different matters; who gives no relief to his work, and exhausts stores of his learning, and spends the whole power of his ingen eagerly in dethroning one particle which has usurped another's pla overthrowing the interpolated verse in St. John, or the spurious ch Josephus, upon which may depend the foundations of a religion articles of its faith.

It is hardly necessary to add, that they who saw Dr. Laurence debate, saw him to the greatest disadvantage, and had no means of anything like a fair estimate of his merits. In the lighter interc society, too, unless in conversation wholly unrestrained by the d distinction, he appeared to little advantage; his mirth, though perfe offensive and good-natured, was elaborate; his wit or drollery concentration and polish; it was unwieldy and clumsy; it was th boling of the elephant, in which, if strength was seen, weight was more; nor was it Milton's elephant, recreating our first parents; a 'to make them play, would wreathe his lithe proboscis;"—but the capered bodily, and in a lumbering fashion, after the manner of h Yet set the same man down to write, and whose compositions are by more perfect propriety, more conciseness, more point, more r His wit sparkles and illuminates, without more effort than is for throwing it off. It is varied, too, and each kind is excellent. learned wit, very frequently, and then wears an elaborate air; stiff or pedantic, not forced or strained, unless we deem Swift's wi it assumes this garb, unnatural or heavy—a sentence which would c some of his most famous pieces, and sweep away almost all Arb together.

In his profession, Dr. Laurence filled the highest place. Pract courts where a single judge decides, and where the whole matter cause is thoroughly sifted and prepared for discussion out of court perienced no ill effect from the tedious style and unattractive manne a jury could not have borne, and felt not the want of that presence and readiness of execution, which enable a Nisi Prius advocate and to act at the moment, according to circumstances suddenly and impossible to foresee. He had all the qualities which his h the forensic art requires; profound learning, various and accura mation upon ordinary affairs as well as the contents of books, ar of labour, not to be satiated by any prolixity and minuteness of de which the most complicated cause could run—a memory which let escape that it had once grasped, whether large in size or impe *small—an abundant* subtlety in the invention of topics to meet an ad *arguments, and* a penetration that never left one point of his

plored. These qualities might very possibly have been modified and led with the greater terseness and dexterity of the common lawyer, his lot been cast in Westminster Hall; but in the precincts of St. Paul's, were more than sufficient to place him at the head of his brethren, o obtain for him the largest share of practice which any Civilian of me could enjoy without office.

e same fulness of information and facility of invention which were so able to his clients, proved most important resources to his political ates, during the thirteen or fourteen years that he sat in Parliament; and ere almost equally useful to the great party he was connected with, ny years before that period. It was a common remark, that nothing qual the richness of his stores, except the liberality with which he them accessible to all. Little as he for some time before his death ken part in debates, and scantily as he had been attended to when he is loss might be plainly perceived, for a long time, in the want lly felt of that kind of information which had flowed so copiously h all the channels of private intercourse, and been obtained so easily, importance was not felt until its sources were closed for ever. It was at men inquired "where Laurence was," as often as a difficulty arose called for more than common ingenuity to meet it; or a subject pre- itself so large and shapeless, and dry and thorny, that few men's le could face, and no one's patience could grapple with it; or an ncy occurred, demanding, on the sudden, access to stores of learning, lection of many long years, but arranged so as to be available to the gnorant at the shortest notice. Men lamented the great loss they perienced, and their regrets were mingled with wonder when they d that the same blow had deprived them of qualities the most rarely in company with such acquirements; for, unwilling as the jealousy an vanity is to admit various excellence in a single individual, *(mos um ut nolint eundem pluribus rebus excellere,)* it was in vain to hat the same person, who exceeded all others in powers of hard g upon the dullest subjects, and who had, by his life of labour, as a Dictionary to his friends, had also produced a larger share than e contributor, to the epigrams, the burlesques, the grave ironies and ad jokes, whether in verse or in prose, of the Rolliad.

highest of the praises which Dr. Laurence had a right to challenge, s. He was a man of scrupulous integrity and unsullied honour; in all trusts; disinterested to a weakness. Constant, but rather, let aid, ardent and enthusiastic in his friendship; abandoning his whole s with a self-dereliction that knew no bounds, either to the cause of nd, or his party, or the common-weal—he commanded the unceas- pect of all with whom he came in contact, or even in conflict; for most offended with his zeal, they were forced to admit, that what bore nblance of intolerance was the fruit of an honest anxiety for a or a principle, and never was pointed towards himself. To the praise ect judgment he was not so well entitled. His naturally warm tem- nt, and his habit of entering into whatever he took up with his faculties, as well as all his feelings, kindled in him the two great pas- hich chequered the latter part of Mr. Burke's life; he spent some pon Mr. Hastings's Impeachment, and some upon the French Re- n, so absorbed in those subjects that their impression could not be ut; *and he ever after appeared* to see one or other of them, and not

unfrequently both together, on whatever ground he might cast his eyes. This almost morbid affection he shared with his protector and friend, of whom we are now to speak.

How much soever men may differ as to the soundness of Mr. Burke's doctrine, or the purity of his public conduct, there can be no hesitation in according to him a station among the most extraordinary men that have ever appeared; and we think there is now but little diversity of opinion as to the kind of place which it is fit to assign him. He was a writer of the first class, and excelled in almost every kind of prose composition. Possessed of most extensive knowledge, and of the most various description; acquainted alike with what different classes of men knew, each in his own province, and with much that hardly any one ever thought of learning; he could either bring his masses of information to bear directly upon the subjects to which they severally belonged—or he could avail himself of them generally to strengthen his faculties and enlarge his views—or he could turn any portion of them to account for the purpose of illustrating his theme, or enriching his diction. Hence, when he is handling any one matter, we perceive that we are conversing with a reasoner or a teacher, to whom almost every other branch of knowledge is familiar: his views range over all the cognate subjects; his reasonings are derived from principles applicable to other theories as well as the one in hand: arguments pour in from all sides, as well as those which start up under our feet, the natural growth of the path he is leading us over; while to throw light round our steps, and either explore its darker places, or serve for our recreation, illustrations are fetched from a thousand quarters; and an imagination marvellously quick to descry unthought-of resemblances, points to our use the stores, which a lore yet more marvellous has gathered from all ages, and nations, and arts, and tongues. We are, in respect of the argument, reminded of Bacon's multifarious knowledge, and the exuberance of his learned fancy; while the many lettered diction recalls to mind the first of English poets, and his immortal verse, rich with the spoils of all sciences and all times.

The kinds of composition are various, and he excels in them all, with the exception of two, the very highest, given but to few, and when given, almost always possessed alone,—fierce, nervous, overwhelming declamation, and close, rapid argument. Every other he uses easily, abundantly, and successfully. He produced but one philosophical treatise; but no man lays down abstract principles more soundly, or better traces their application. All his works, indeed, even his controversial, are so informed with general reflection, so variegated with speculative discussion, that they wear the air of the Lyceum as well as the Academy. His narrative is excellent; and it is impossible more luminously to expose the details of a complicated subject, to give them more animation and interest, if dry in themselves, or to make them bear, by the mere power of statement, more powerfully upon the argument. In description he can hardly be surpassed, at least for effect; he has all the qualities that conduce to it—ardour of purpose, sometimes rising into violence—vivid, but too luxuriant fancy,—bold, frequently extravagant, conception—the faculty of shedding over mere inanimate scenery the light imparted by moral associations. He indulges in bitter invective, mingled with poignant wit, but descending often to abuse and even scurrility; he is apt moreover to carry an attack too far, as well as strain the *application of a principle*; to slay the slain, or turn the reader's contempt *into pity*.

in the various kinds of writing, so in the different styles, he had an t universal excellence, one only being deficient, the plain and un- ed. Not but that he could, in unfolding a doctrine or pursuing a nar- write for a little with admirable simplicity and propriety; only he not sustain this self-denial; his brilliant imagination and well-stored y soon broke through the restraint. But in all other styles, passages t end occur of the highest order—epigram—pathos—metaphor in ou, chequered with more didactic and sober diction. Nor are his figurative passages the finest even as figured writing; he is best he metaphor is subdued, mixed as it were with plainer matter to it, and used not by itself, and for its own sake, but giving point to a useful instrument, made of more ordinary material; or at the most, ff by the heat of composition, like sparks from a working engine, not rks for mere display. Speaking of the authors of the Declaration it, he calls them "those whose penetrating style has engraved in our ces and in our hearts, the words and spirit of that immortal law." *flections on the French Revolution.)* So discoursing of the imi- of natural magnitude by artifice and skill—"A true artist should generous deceit on the spectators, and effect the noblest designs by ethods."—*(Sublime and Beautiful, Part* 2. § 10*)*. "When pleasure we relapse into indifference, or rather we fall into a soft tranquillity, is tinged with the agreeable colour of the former sensation."—*Part* 1. § 3.*)* "Every age has its own manners, and its politics de- t on them; and the same attempts will not be made against a ution fully formed and matured, that were used to destroy it in the or resist its growth during its infancy."—*(Thoughts on the Causes resent Discontents.)* "Faction will make its cries resound through ion, as if the whole were in an uproar."—*(Ibid.)* In works of a nature, upon the affairs of real life, as political discourses and s, figurative style should hardly ever go beyond this. But a strict se metaphor or simile may be allowed, provided it be most sparingly nd never deviate from the subject matter, so as to make it disappear rnament. "The judgment is for the greater part employed in throw- mbling blocks in the way of the imagination" (says Mr. Burke), "in ting the scenes of its enchantment, and in tying us down to the eable yoke of our reason."—*(Discourses on Taste.)* He has here expressed figuratively the principle we are laying down, and il- ed our remark by the temperance of his metaphors, which, though do not offend, because they come so near mere figurative language ey may be regarded like the last set of examples, rather as forms of sion than tropes. "A great deal of the furniture of ancient tyranny n to rags; the rest is entirely out of fashion."—*(Thoughts on the ntents.)* A most apt illustration of his important position, that we to be as jealous of little encroachments, now the chief sources of , as our ancestors were of *Ship Money* and the *Forest Laws*. "A of men," (speaking of one constant and baneful effect of grievances,) hom a state of order would become a sentence of obscurity, are hed into a dangerous magnitude by the heat of intestine disturbances; is no wonder that, by a sort of sinister piety, they cherish, in , those disorders which are the parents of all their consequence."—) "We have not (says he of the English Church establishment) gated religion to obscure municipalities or rustic villages—No! we will

have her to exalt her mitred front in courts and parliament."—*(Reflections on the French Revolution.)* But if these should seem so temperate as hardly to be separate figures, the celebrated comparison of the Queen of France, though going to the verge of chaste style, hardly passes it. "And surely, never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in—glittering like the morning star, full of life, and splendour, and joy".—*(Ibid.)*

All his writings, but especially his later ones, abound in examples of the abuse of this style, in which, unlike those we have been dwelling upon with unmixed admiration, the subject is lost sight of, and the figure usurps its place, almost as much as in Homer's longer *similes*, and is oftentimes pursued, not merely with extravagance and violence, but into details that offend by their coarseness, as well as their strained connexion with the matter in question. The comparison of a noble adversary to the whale, in which the grantee of the crown is altogether forgotten, and the fish alone remains; of one Republican ruler to a cannibal in his den, where he paints him as having actually devoured a king and suffering from indigestion; of another, to a retailer of dresses, in which character the nature of constitutions is forgotten in that of millinery,—are instances too well known to be further dwelt upon; and they were the produce, not of the "audacity of youth," but of the last year of his life. It must, however, be confessed, that he was at all times somewhat tainted with what Johnson imputes to Swift, a proneness to "revolve ideas from which other minds shrink with disgust." At least he must be allowed to have often mistaken violence and grossness for vigour. "The anodyne draught of oblivion, thus drugged, is well calculated to preserve a galling wakefulness, and to feed the living ulcer of a corroding memory. Thus to administer the opiate potion of animosity, powdered with all the ingredients of scorn and contempt," etc.—*(Reflections on the French Revolution).* "They are not repelled through a fastidious delicacy at the stench of their arrogance and presumption, from a medicinal attention to their mental blotches and running sores."—*(Ibid.)* "Those bodies, which, when full of life and beauty, lay in their arms, and were their joy and comfort, when dead and putrid, became but the more loathsome from remembrance of former endearments."—*(Thoughts.)* "The vital powers, wasted in an unequal struggle, are pushed back upon themselves, and fester to gangrene, to death; and instead of what was but just now the delight of the creation, there will be cast out in the face of the sun, a bloated, putrid, noisome carcass, full of stench and poison, an offence, a horror, a lesson to the world." *(Speech on the Nabob's Debts.)* Some passages are not fit to be cited, and could not now be tolerated in either house of Parliament, for the indecency of their allusions—as in the Regency debates, and the attack upon lawyers on the Impeachment continuation. But the finest of his speeches, which we have just quoted from, though it does not go so far from propriety, falls not much within its bounds. Of Mr. Dundas he says—"With six great chopping bastards *(Reports of Secret Committee)*, each as lusty as an infant Hercules, this delicate creature blushes at the sight of her new bridegroom, assumes a virgin delicacy; or, to use a more fit, as well as a more poetical comparison, the person so squeamish, so timid, so trembling, lest the winds of heaven should visit too roughly, is expanded to broad sunshine, exposed like the sow of imperial augury, lying in the mud with all the pro-

of her fertility about her, as evidence of her delicate amour."—
)

another characteristic of this great writer, that the unlimited abun-
of his stores makes him profuse in their expenditure: Never content
ne view of a subject, or one manner of handling it, he for the most
ıvishes his whole resources upon the discussion of each point. In
versy this is emphatically the case. Indeed, nothing is more re-
ble than the variety of ways in which he makes his approaches to any
n he would master. After reconnoitring it with skill and boldness,
with perfect accuracy, he manœuvres with infinite address, and
a most imposing force of general principles mustered from all parts,
inted, sometimes violently enough, in one direction. He now moves
h the composed air, the even, dignified pace of the historian; and
his facts in a narrative so easy, and yet so correct, that you plainly
'e he wanted only the dismissal of other pursuits to have rivalled
r Hume. But soon this advance is interrupted, and he stops to dis-
is powers of description—when the boldness of his design is only
d by the brilliancy of his colouring. He then skirmishes for a space,
ts in motion all the lighter arms of wit—sometimes not unmingled
rollery—sometimes bordering upon farce. His main battery is now
, and a tempest bursts forth, of every weapon of attack—invective—
-irony—sarcasm—simile, drawn out to allegory—allusion—quo-
-fable—parable—anathema. The heavy artillery of powerful de-
ion, and the conflict of close argument alone are wanting; but of this
rison is not always aware; his noise is oftentimes mistaken for the
r of true eloquence; the number of his movements distracts, and the
of his missiles annoys the adversary; a panic spreads, and he carries
ıt, as if he had actually made a practicable breach; nor is it discovered
:r the smoke and confusion is over, that the citadel remains un-
d.

'y one of Mr. Burke's works that is of any importance, presents,
in different degrees, these features to the view—from the most
and temperate, his *Thoughts on the Discontents*, to the least fault-
ıd severe—his richer and more ornate, as well as vehement tracts
:volutionary politics—his letters on the *Regicide Peace*, and *Defence*
Pension. His speeches differ not at all from his pamphlets; these are
speeches, or those are spoken dissertations, according as any one
studious of method and closeness in a book, or of ease and nature
ration. The principal defects which we have hinted at are a serious
tion from merit of the highest order in both kinds of composition.
his spoken eloquence, the failure which it is known attended him
'eat part of his Parliamentary life, is not to be explained by the mere
: of what alone he wanted to equal the greatest of orators.

ıct, he was deficient in judgment; he regarded not the degree of in-
elt by his audience in the topics which deeply occupied himself; and
knew when he had said enough on those which affected them as well
He was admirable in exposition; in truth, he delighted to give in-
ɔn both when speaking and conversing, and in this he was unrivalled.
: *in sententiis argutior? in docendo edisserendoque subtilior?*"
ɔx might well avow, without a compliment, that he had learnt more
im alone than from all other men and authors. But if any one thing
ed by *unvarying* experience of popular assemblies, it is, that an ex-

cellent dissertation makes a very bad speech. The speaker is not the o person actively engaged while a great oration is pronouncing; the audie have their share; they must be excited, and for this purpose constantly pealed to as recognised persons of the drama. The didactic orator (i has been said of the poet, it be not a contradiction in terms) has it a himself; the hearer is merely passive; and the consequence is, he ceases to be a listener, and if he can, even to be a spectator. Mr. B was essentially didactic, except when the violence of his invective ca him away, and then he offended the correct taste of the House of Comm by going beyond the occasion, and by descending to coarseness.* W he argued, it was by unfolding large views, and seizing upon analogie remote, and drawing distinctions "too fine for hearers," or, at the bes a body of statements, lucid, certainly, and diversified with flower and and lighted up with pleasantry, but almost always in excess, and over in these qualities as well as in its own substance. He had little pow hard stringent reasoning, as we have more than once remarked; an declamation was addressed to the head, as from the head it proce learned, fanciful, ingenious, but not impassioned. Of him, as a comba we may say what Aristotle did of the old philosophers, when he comp them to unskilful boxers, who hit round about, and not straight forward fight with little effect, though they may by chance sometimes deal a blow.—Οιον εν ταις μαχαις οἱ αγυμνασοι ποιουσι. και γαρ εκεινοι φερουμενοι τυπτουσι πολλακις καλας πληγας· αλλ' ουτ' εκεινοι απ' επιστ *(Metaphys.)*†

Cicero has somewhere called Eloquence *copiose loquens sapientia.* may be true of written, but of spoken eloquence it is a defective defini and will, at the best, only comprehend the Demonstrative (or Epid kind, which is banished, for want of an audience, from all modern ass blies of a secular description. Thus, though it well characterises Burke, yet the defects which we have pointed out were fatal to his suc Accordingly the test of eloquence which the same master has in so p resque a manner given, from his own constant experience, here ent failed.—"Volo hoc oratori contingat, ut, cum auditum sit eum esse dictu locus in subseliis occupetur, compleatur tribunal, gratiosi scribæ in dando et cedendo loc, corona multiplex, judex erectus; cum s is, qui dicturus sit, [significetur a corona silentium, deinde cr assensiones, multæ admirationes: risus, cum velit; cum velit, fletus qui hæc procul videat, etiamsi quid agatur nesciat: at placere tamen, scenaesse Roscium intelligat." For many years, that is between the l

* The charge of coarseness, or rather of vulgarity of language, has, to the astonishment who knew him, and understood pure idiomatic English, been made against Mr. Windha only by persons unacquainted with both. To him might nearly be applied the beautiful sk Crassus by M. Tullius—"Quo," says he, "nihil statuo fieri potuisse perfectius. Erat summ vitas, erat cum gravitate junctus, facetiarum et urbanitatis oratorius, non scurrilis lepos. loquendi accurata, et sine molestiâ diligens elegantia—in disserendo mira explicatio; cum civili, cum de æquo et bono disputaretur argumentorum et similitudinum copia." Let n reader reject even the latter features, those certainly of an advocate; at least let him first re W.'s Speech on the Law of Evidence, in the Duke of York's case.

† The Attic reader will be here reminded of the First Philippic, in which a very rema passage, and in part too applicable to our subject, seems to have been suggested by the pas the text; and its great felicity both of apt comparison and of wit, should, with a thousand passages, have made critics pause before they denied those qualities to the chief of o Ωσπερ δε οἱ βαρβαροι πυκτευουσιν, ουτω πολεμειτε Φιλιππω. και γαρ εκεινων ο πληγ της πληγης εχεται. και εαν στρωσι παταξη τις, εκεισε εισιν και χειρες. προβαλλεσθα βλεπειν εναντιον, ουτ' οιδεν, ουτ' εθελει, which he proceeds to illustrate by the conduc *respecting the Chersonese*, and Thermopylæ.

t of the American war, and the speeches which he made, neither many, long, nor in a very usual or regular style, on the French Revolution, the y reverse of all this was to be seen and lamented, as often as Mr. Burke ıc. The spectator saw no signs of Roscius being in action, but rather ıe eminent civilian we have already spoken of. "Videt" (as the same ; has, in another passage, almost to the letter described it) "oscitantem :em, loquentem cum altero, nonnunquam etiam circulantem, mittentem ɔras; quæsitorem, ut dimittat, rogantem;* intelligit, oratorem in ea ı non adesse, qui possit animis judicum admovere orationem, tanquam us manum."

ıt it may justly be said, with the second of Attic orators, that sense is ys more important than eloquence; and no one can doubt that enlight- men in all ages will hang over the works of Mr. Burke, and dwell delight even upon the speeches that failed to command the attention ose to whom they were addressed. Nor is it by their rhetorical ies that they interest us. The extraordinary depth of his detached , the penetrating sagacity which he *occasionally* applies to the affairs en and their motives, and the curious felicity of expression with which ıfolds principles, and traces resemblances and relations, are separately ift of few, and in their union probably without any example. This be admitted on all hands; it is possibly the last of our observations h will obtain universal assent, as it is the last we have to offer before ng upon disputed ground, where the fierce contentions of politicians the more quiet path of the critic.

ɔt content with the praise of his philosophic acuteness, which all are to allow, the less temperate admirers of this great writer have bed to him a gift of genius approaching to the power of divination, and recognised him as in possession of a judgment so acute and so calm ıl, that its decisions might claim the authority of infallible decrees. ɔpinions have been viewed as always resulting from general principles erately applied to each emergency; and they have been looked upon rming a connected system of doctrines, by which his own sentiments conduct were regulated, and from which aftertimes may derive the ns of practical wisdom.

consideration which at once occurs, as casting suspicion upon the lness, if not also upon the sincerity, of these encomiums, is, that they r were dreamt of until the questions arose concerning the French lution; and yet, if well founded, they were due to the former prin- s and conduct of their object; for it is wholly inconsistent with their to admit that the doctrines so extolled were the rank and sudden th of the heats which the changes of 1789 had generated. Their title much admiration and to our implicit confidence, must depend upon being the slowly matured fruit of a profound philosophy, which had tigated and compared; pursuing the analogies of things, and tracing ts to their remote origin in the principles of human nature. Yet it is in that these reasoners (if reasoning can indeed be deemed their ion) never discovered a single merit in Mr. Burke's opinions, or hing to praise, or even to endure, in his conduct, from his entrance public life in 1765, to the period of that stormy confusion of all parties all political attachments, which took place in 1791, a short time before

*his desire in the English *senate* is irregularly signified, by the cries of "Question," there not a *proper quarter to appeal to*, as in the Roman courts.

he quitted it. They are therefore placed in a dilemma, from which it would puzzle subtler dialecticians to escape. Either they or their idol have changed; either they have received a new light, or he is a changeling god. They are either converts to a faith, which, for so many years, and during so many vicissitudes, they had, in their preaching and in their lives, held to be damnable; or they are believers in a heresy, lightly taken up by its author, and promulgated to suit the wholly secular purposes of some particular season.

We believe a very little examination of the facts will suffice to show, that the believers have been more consistent than their oracle; and that they escape from the charge of fickleness, at the expense of the authority due to the faith last proclaimed from his altar. It would, indeed, be difficult to select one leading principle or prevailing sentiment in Mr. Burke's latest writings, to which something extremely adverse may not be found in his former, we can hardly say his early works;—excepting only the subject of Parliamentary Reform, to which, with all the friends of Lord Rockingham, he was from the beginning adverse; and in favour of which he found so very hesitating and lukewarm a feeling among Mr. Fox's supporters, as hardly amounted to a difference, certainly offered no inducements to compromise the opinions of his own party. Searching after the monuments of altered principles, we will not resort to his first works—in one of which he terms Damien "a late *unfortunate* regicide," looking only at his punishment, and disregarding his offence; neither shall we look into his speeches, exceeding, as they did, the bounds which all other men, even in the heat of debate, prescribe to themselves in speaking now of the first magistrate of the country, while labouring under a calamitous visitation of Providence—now of kings generally. But we may fairly take as the standard of his opinions, best weighed and most deliberately pronounced, the calmest of all his productions, and the most fully considered,—given to the world when he had long passed the middle age of life, had filled a high station, and been for years eminent in parliamentary history.* Although, in compositions of this kind, more depends upon the general tone of a work than on particular passages, because the temper of mind on certain points may be better gathered from that, than from any expressly stated propositions, yet we have but to open the book to see that his *Thoughts* in 1760, were very different from those which breathe through every page of his Anti-Jacobin writings. And first of the Corinthian Capital of 1790. "I am no friend" (says he in 1770) "to aristocracy, in the sense at least in which that word is usually understood. If it were not a bad habit to moot cases on the supposed ruin of the constitution, I should be free to declare, that if it must perish, I would rather by far see it resolved into any other form, than lost in that austere and insolent domination." (*Works*, ii. 246.) His comfort is derived from the consideration "that the generality of peers are but too apt to fall into an oblivion of their proper dignity, and run headlong into an abject servitude." Next of "the Swinish Multitude."—"When popular discontents have been very prevalent, it may well be affirmed and supported, that there has been generally something found amiss in the constitution, or in the conduct of government. The people have no interest in disorder. When they do wrong, it is their error, not their crime. But with the governing part of the state it is far otherwise,"—and he quotes the

* *The Thoughts on the Causes of the present Discontents* was published in 1770—when Mr. B. was above 40 years old.

aying of Sully—"Pour la populace, ce n'est jamais par envie d'attaquer u'elle se soulève, mais par impatience de souffrir." (*Ib.* 224.) Again, of he people as "having nothing to do with the laws but to obey them"—"I see no other way for the preservation of a decent attention to public interest in the representatives, but *the interposition of the body of the people itself*,* whenever it shall appear by some flagrant and notorious act,—by some capital innovation—that these representatives are going to overleap the fences of the law, and to introduce an arbitrary power. This interposition is a most unpleasant remedy. But if it be a legal remedy, it is intended on some occasion to be used—to be used then only when it is evident that nothing else can hold the constitution to its true principles. It is not in Parliament alone that the remedy for Parliamentary disorders can be completed; hardly indeed can it egin there. Until a confidence in government is re-established, the eople ought to be excited to a more strict and detailed attention to the onduct of their representatives. Standards for judging more systematically pon their conduct ought to be settled in the meetings of counties and corrations. Frequent and correct lists of the voters in all important questons ought to be procured." (*Ib.* 324.) The reasons which call for popular interposition, and made him preach it at a season of unprecedented opular excitement, are stated to be "the immense revenue, enormous debt, nd mighty establishments;" and he requires the House of Commons "to ear some stamp of the actual disposition of the people at large;" adding, hat "it would be a more natural and tolerable evil, that the House should e infected with every epidemical frenzy of the people, as this would indicate some consanguinity, some sympathy of nature with their constituents, han that they should in all cases be wholly untouched by the opinions and eelings of the people out of doors." Now let us step aside for a moment o remark, that the "*immense revenue*" was under 10 millions; the "*enormous debt*" 130; and the "*mighty establishments*" cost about 6 millions -year. The statesman who, on this account, recommended popular interference in 1770, lived to see the revenue 24 millions; the debt, 350; the stablishment, 30; and the ruling principle of his latter days operating with he vehemence of a passion, was the all-sufficiency of Parliament and the Crown, and the fatal consequence of according to the people any the slightest hare of direct power in the state.

His theoretical view of the constitution in those days, was as different from the high monarchical tone of his latter writings. The King was then "the representative of the people,"—"so" (he adds) "are the Lords—so are the Judges; they are all trustees for the people, as well as the Commons, because no power is given for the sole sake of the holder; and although government certainly is an institution of divine authority, yet its forms, and the persons who administer it, all originate from the people." And then comes that immortal passage so often cited, and which ought to be blazoned in letters of fire over the porch of the Commons House; illustrating the doctrine it sets out with, that "their representatives are a control *for* the people, and not *upon* the people; and that the virtue, spirit, and essence of a House of Commons, consists in its being the express image of the feelings of the nation." (*Ibid.* 288.)† It may be superfluous to add,

* Ital. in orig.

† "A vigilant *and jealous eye over* executory and judicial magistracy; an anxious care of public money; *an openness approaching towards* facility, to public complaint; these seem to be the true

that one so deeply imbued with the soundest principles of a free constitution, must always have regarded the Bourbon rulers with singular dislike, while he saw in the English government the natural ally of Liberty, wheresoever she was struggling with her chains. Accordingly, in the same famous work, he exclaims, "Such was the conquest of Corsica, by the professed enemies of the freedom of mankind, in defiance of those who were formerly its professed defenders." (*Ibid.* 272.)

Although it cannot be denied that a considerable portion of the deference which Mr. Burke's later and more celebrated opinions are entitled to command, is thus taken away, and, as it were, shared by the conflicting authority of his earlier sentiments, his disciples may, nevertheless, be willing to rest his claims to a reverent, if not an implicit observance, upon the last, as the maturest efforts of his genius. Now, it appears to us, that in this extraordinary person the usual progress of the faculties in growth and decline, was in some measure reversed; his fancy became more vivid,—it burnt, as it were, brighter before its extinction; while age, which had only increased that light, lessened the power of profiting from it, by weakening the judgment as the imagination gained luxuriance and strength. Thus his old age resembled that of other men in one particular only; he was more haunted by fears; and more easily became the dupe of imposture as well as alarm.

It is, we apprehend, quite vain now to deny, that the unfavourable decision which those feelings led him to form of the French Revolution, was, in the main, incorrect and exaggerated. That he was right in expecting much confusion and mischief from the passions of a whole nation let loose, and influenced only by the various mobs of its capital, literary and political, in the assemblies, the club-rooms, the theatre, and the streets, no one can doubt; nor was he at all singular in the apprehensions he felt. But beyond this very scanty, and not very difficult portion of his predictions, it would be hard to show any signal instance of their fulfilment. Except in lamenting the excesses of the times of terror, and in admitting them to form a large deduction from the estimate of the benefits of the revolution, it would be no easy matter to point out a single opinion of his which any rational and moderate man of the present day will avow. Those who claim for Mr. Burke's doctrines in 1790, the praise of a sagacity and foresight hardly human, would do well to recollect his speech on the Army Estimates of that year. It is published by himself, corrected,* and its drift is to show the uselessness of a large force, because "France must now be considered as expunged out of the system of Europe;" it expresses much doubt if she can ever resume her station "as a leading power;" anticipates "the language of the rising generation—"*Gallos quoque in bellis floruisse audivimus*;" and decides, that at all events her restoration to anything like a substantive existence, must, under a republic, be the work of "much time." Scarce two

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characteristics of a House of Commons. But an addressing House of Commons and a petitioning nation; a House of Commons full of confidence, when the nation is plunged in despair; in the utmost harmony with ministers whom the people regard with the utmost abhorrence; who vote thanks, when the public opinion calls upon them for impeachments; who are eager to grant, when the general voice demands account; who, in all disputes between the people and the administration, pronounce against the people; who punish their disorders, but refuse even to inquire into *the provocations* to them; this is an unnatural, a monstrous state of things in the constitution. *Such an assembly* may be a great, wise, awful senate; but it is not to any popular purpose a *House of Commons.*" (*Ib.* 289.)

* *Works.*—Vol. v. page 1.

years elapsed before this same France, without any change whatever in her situation, except the increase of the anarchy that had expunged her from the map, declared war on Austria, and in a few months more carried her conquests so much further than Louis XIV. had done, when the firmness and judgment of King William opposed him, that Mr. Burke now said a universal league was necessary to avert her universal dominion, and that it was a question whether she would suffer any one throne to stand in Europe. The same eulogists of Mr. Burke's sagacity would also do well to recollect those yearly predictions of the complete internal ruin which for so long a period alternated with alarms at the foreign aggrandisement of the Republic; hey all originated in his famous work—though it contains some prophecies oo extravagant to be borrowed by his most servile imitators. Thus he ontends that the population of France is irreparably diminished by the evolution, and actually adopts a calculation which makes the distress of 'aris require above two millions sterling for its yearly relief; a sum sufficient o pay each family above seventeen pounds, or to defray its whole expen- iture in that country. Surely one so easily led away by his prejudices, an in no sense be reckoned a safe guide, or be extolled for more than or- inary sagacity.

But on these grounds a further allowance is made, and a new deduction ntroduced, from the sum total of the deference paid to his authority. It is aid that the sagacity and penetration which we are bid to reverence, were ever at fault, unless on points where strong feelings interfered. The pro- osition must be admitted, and without any qualification. But it leads not o an abatement merely—it operates a release of the whole debt of defe- ence and respect. For one clever man's opinion is just as good as another's, f both are equally uninfluenced by passions and feelings of every kind. Nor was it only on the French Revolution that Mr. Burke's prejudices warped his judgment. Whatever subject interested him strongly, he re- garded generally in false colours and distorted shape; always in exaggerated limensions. The fate of society, for many years, hung upon Hastings's mpeachment; during that period he exhausted as much vituperation upon he East Indians in this country, as he afterwards did on the Jacobins; and ne was not more ready to quarrel with Mr. Fox on a difference of opinion bout France, than he had been a year before to attack Mr. Erskine with very weapon of personal and professional abuse, upon a slighter difference about the Abating of the Impeachment. Nay, after the Hastings question might have been supposed forgotten, or merged in the more recent con- troversy on French affairs, he deliberately enumerates, among the causes of alarm at French principles, the prevalence of the East India interest in England; ranks "Nabobs" with the diplomatic body all over Europe, as naturally and incurably Jacobin; and warns this country loudly and solemnly against suffering itself to be overthrown by a "Bengal junto."

The like infirmity of a judgment weakened, no doubt, by his temper, pursues him through the whole details of every question that excites him; that is, of every question that engages his attention. But it is most con- spicuous, of course, in all that relates to France, because France was the master topic. He is blinded to the impressions on his very senses, not by the "light shining inward," but by the heat of his passions. He sees not what all other men behold, but what he wishes to see, or what his pre- judices and fantasies *suggest*; and having once pronounced a dogma, the *most astounding contradictions* that events can give him, assail his mind,

and even his senses, in vain. Early in 1790 he pronounced France tinguished, as regarded her external force. But at the end of 1793, w the second attempt to invade her had ended in the utter discomfiture o assailants, when she was rioting in the successes of an offensive war, had armed her whole people to threaten the liberties of Europe, he sees in her situation nothing but "complete ruin, without the chanc resurrection," and still reckons, that when she recovers her nominal e tence by a restoration of the monarchy, "it will be as much as al neighbours "can do, by a steady guarantee, to keep her upon her bas (Works, vii. 185.) That he should confound all persons, as well as th in his extravagant speculations, surprises less than such delusions as We are little astonished at finding him repeatedly class the humane chivalrous La Fayette with the monster Robespierre; but when we him pursuing his theory, that all Atheists are Jacobins, so far as to cl Hume with being a leveller, and pressing the converse of the proposi so far as to insinuate that Priestley was an Atheist, we pause incredu over the sad devastation which a disordered fancy can make in the understanding.—(vii. 58.)

That the warlike policy which he recommended against France, more consistent than the course pursued by the ministry, may be adm The weak and ruinous plan of leaving the enemy to conquer all Eu while we wasted our treasure and our blood in taking sugar islan increase the African Slave Trade, and mow down whole armies by pestil has been oftentimes painted in strong colours, never stronger than the t and our arms only were successful when this wretched system was doned. But if Mr. Burke faintly and darkly arraigned this plan of rations, it was on grounds so purely fanciful, and he dashed the with such a mixture of manifest error, that he unavoidably both prev his councils from being respected, and subjected his own policy to i tations full as serious as those he brought against the Government. highly approved of the emigration, because France was no longer i out of France; he insisted on an invasion, for the avowed purpose of r ing monarchy and punishing its enemies; he required the advanced of the attacking army to be composed of the bands of French gentl emigrants, and to be accompanied by the exiled priests; and, in ord make the movement more popular, they were to be preceded by the clamation of solemn leagues among the allies, never to treat with a re that had slain its king, and formal announcements that they entere country to punish and to restore.

Mr. Burke lived not to see the power of the revolutionary governmente itself resistless in the direction he had pronounced impossible, or prove less in the only way he deemed it formidable. The downfall of th vernment he lived not to see thrice accomplished, without one of his being followed. Yet let us not doubt his opinions upon the restorat his favourite dynasty, had he survived its exile. With all his bright and solid learning, his venerable name would have been found at the or rather say in advance, of the most universally and most justly conte faction in the world. The *Ultras* would have owned him for their l and would have admitted that he went beyond them in the uncompro *consistency* of his extravagant dogmas. He who had deemed the ki

* *She had at that time* 750,000 men under arms, without calling out the second conscr

punishments that should be meted out, the most important point to settle previously, and had thought it necessary, in many a long and laboured page, to discuss this when the prospects of the Bourbons were desperate, (vii. 187,) and to guard them by all arguments against listening to plans of amnesty, would have objected vehemently to every one act of the restored government; regarded the *charter* as an act of abdication; the security of property as robbery and sacrilege: the impunity of the Jacobins, as making the monarch an accessary after the fact to his brother's murder: and what all men of sound minds regarded as a state of great improvement, blessing the country with much happiness, freeing it from many abuses, and giving it precious hopes of liberty, he would have pronounced the height of misery and degradation. If such had not proved to be his views, living in our times, he must have changed all the opinions which he professed up to the hour of his death.

Upon one subject alone could he have been found ranged with the Liberal party of the present day; he always, from a very early period, and before sound principles were disseminated on questions of political economy, held the most enlightened opinions on all subjects of mercantile policy. Here his mind seemed warped by no bias, and his profound understanding and habits of observation led him right. His works abound with just and original reflections upon these matters, and they form a striking contrast to the narrow views which, in his latter years, he was prone to take of all that touched the interests and the improvement of mankind. For his whole habits of thinking seemed perverted by the dread of change; and he never reflected, except in the single case of the Irish Catholics, that the surest way of bringing about a violent revolution, is to resist a peaceful reform.

As he dreaded all plans of amendment which sought to work by perceivable agency, and within a moderate compass of time, so he distrusted all who patronized them—asserting their conduct to be wild and visionary enthusiasm at the best, but generally imputing their zeal to some sinister motives of personal interest. Most unjustly—most unphilosophically—most unthinkingly—it is the natural tendency of men connected with the upper ranks of society, and separated from the mass of the community, to undervalue things which only affect the rights or the interests of the people. Against this leaning to which he had yielded, it becomes them to struggle; and their honest devotion to the cause of peaceable improvement, their virtuous labours bestowed in advaucing the dignity and happiness of their fellow-creatures, their perils and their losses encountered in defence of the rights of oppressed men, are the most glorious titles to the veneration of the good and the wise—but they are titles which he would have scornfully rejected, or covered with the tide of his indignant sarscasm, whom Providence had endowed with such rare parts, and originally imbued with such love of liberty, that he seemed especially raised up as an instrument for instructing and mending his kind.

In the imperfect estimate of this great man's character and genius, which we have now concluded, let it not be thought that we have made any very large exceptions to the praise unquestionably his due. We have only abated claims preferred by his unheeding worshippers to more than mortal endowments. Enough will remain to command our admiration, after it shall be admitted that he who possessed the finest fancy, and the rarest knowledge, did not *equally excel other* men in sound and calm judgment; enough to *excite our wonder at the* degree in which he was gifted with most parts of

genius, though our credulity be not staggered by the assertion of a miraculous union of them all. We have been contemplating a great marvel, certainly, not gazing on a supernatural sight; and we retire from it with the belief, that, if acuteness, learning, imagination so unmeasured, were never before combined, yet have there been occasionally witnessed, in eminent men, greater powers of close reasoning and fervid declamation, oftentimes a more correct taste, for the most part a safer judgment.*

DEMOSTHENES.†

Without any ostentation of profound reflection or philosophical remark—with few attempts at generalization—without the glare and attraction of prominent ornaments—with extremely few, and those not very successful, instances of the tender and pathetic—with a considerable degree of coarseness, and what we should call vulgarity, particularly in his great oration—and, absolutely, without any pretension to wit or humour, to have acquired the reputation of the Greatest Orator whom the world has ever produced, is a peculiarity which belongs to the character of Demosthenes. In no other instance, in the whole range and circle of the Fine Arts, is the same ascendancy admitted with the same degree of unanimity. "Of the three Poets," for instance, "in three distant ages born," what critic has ever pretended, with any success at least, to class and place them in their due rank and order of merit? Is it not notorious, that, with one reader, the vigour and freshness of the father of poetry have superior charms; with another, the delicacy of taste and passion pre-eminent in the Roman poet; and, with a third, the learned copiousness of our own countryman? Not to mention the partisans of Dante, of Tasso, and of Ariosto, who severally contest, for these distinguished Italians, the point of precedence with the three, most usually admitted, Princes of Epic Poetry. To the Tragedians of antiquity, the same observation applies. The gorgeous declamation of Æschylus, the passionate eloquence of Euripides, and the measured stateliness of Sophocles, attract to each their several admirers and advocates, without being able to procure an admitted superiority. The same thing may be said of the Greek and Roman, and (if there be any who do not shrink from the comparison) of the modern Historians also. Nobody affects to say which is *the best*.—To take one instance more.—In a case, in which, amongst every description of readers in this kingdom, learned and unlearned, there is a more perfect (and we doubt not, in the main, just) agreement, than upon any other subject of criticism whatever,—we mean the almost universally prevalent opinion of the unrivalled excellence of our own Shakspeare—is not this very preference of the Poet of Nature considered, by our fastidious neighbours, as a decisive proof of the remains of

* In the Review of *Coleridge's Biographia Literaria*, Vol. xxviii. page 503, there is a well-written sketch of the character of Edmund Burke. It is no violation of confidence to state that it was the production of the late Mr. Hazlitt, as it has been since reprinted in the miscellaneous works of that clever and ill-appreciated author.

† Œuvres complètes de Demosthène et d'Eschine, en Grec et en Français. Traduction de l'Abbé Auger, de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres de Paris. Nouvelle édition. Revue et corrigée par J. Planche, professeur de Rhétorique au Collége Royal de Bourbon. Paris, année 1819.—*Vol. xxxiii. page 226.* January, 1820.

arbarism,—the "vestigia ruris" amongst us? To Demosthenes alone, in hat faculty which is common to the whole species, and one of its highest listinctions, and in which all mankind must have been, in some degree, is competitors, is the palm conceded by (nearly) the unanimous consent f ancient and modern times.

It is not our intention to do more than make extracts sparingly from the any things which have been written upon this subject; but we shall notice ome of the most remarkable. The opinion delivered by Hume (in which e has been implicitly followed by Dr. Blair) in his celebrated Essay upon loquence, is, of course, familiar to our readers.

By no other writer, not merely has a more decisive judgment been pro-ounced in favour of Demosthenes, but by none are the peculiar qualities and istinguishing properties of his style more vigorously and happily, though riefly, portrayed, than by this most acute and ingenious Critic. After marking that his manner is more chaste and austere than that of Cicero, e proceeds thus—"Could it be copied, its success would be infallible over modern assembly. It is rapid harmony exactly adjusted to the sense: is vehement reasoning without any appearance of art: it is disdain, nger, boldness, freedom, involved in a continued stream of argument: and, f all human productions, the Orations of Demosthenes present to us the odels which approach the nearest to perfection." How well this agrees ith the testimonials of antiquity, we shall see hereafter; for the present we hall only remark, that this commendation of Demosthenes is in a style of ecision, and even of animation, very different from the balancing and cau-ous system habitually adopted by our reserved and dispassionate country-an. It is manifest he must have felt very strongly, before he would have xpressed himself so warmly.

Longinus is, obviously, a writer for *effect*. The different authors, who re the subjects of his criticism, are, in truth, little more than instruments r forwarding his principal purpose, which is to let his readers see what e himself can do in the sublime. In his often quoted, and, we suppose we ust add, celebrated description of the Greek and Roman orators, for in-lance, in which he is pleased to compare the one to a thunderbolt, and the ther to a conflagration,—what precise idea of their particular qualities can e collected—what distinct or individual picture of the leading features and haracteristics of those great masters is presented to the mind? Apart from he principal purpose of showing off, we believe he might as usefully have ompared them to frost and snow. This writer, however, in his general riticism upon Demosthenes, after having contrasted him with Hyperides, and, pparently, intimated a pretty strong opinion in favour of the latter, (as to he correctness of which opinion we have no direct means of judging, but s Cicero is against him, we doubt not he is wrong,) concludes with the fol-owing laboured and remarkable passage.

Αλλ' ἐπειδήπερ, οιμᾶι, τὰ μὲν θατέρου καλὰ, καὶ εἰ πολλὰ. Ὅμως αμεγέδη καὶ καρδίη νήφοντος, (Anglicè, '*sober at heart*') ἀργὰ, καὶ τὸν ἀκροατὴν ἠρεμεῖν εῶντά, οὐδέις γοῦν Υπερίδην αναγινώσκων φοβειται·—Ὁ δὲ ἔνθεν ελὼν τοῦ μεγαλοφυεστάτου καὶ επ' ἄκρον ἀρετάς συν τετελεσμένας,—ὑψηγορίας τόνον, ἔμψυχα πάθη, περιουσίαν, ἀγχίνοιαν, τάχος,—ενθενδ', (ὁ κύριον) τὴν ἅπασιν απρόσιτον δεινότητά καὶ δύναμιν, ἐπειδὴ ταῦτα, φημὶ, ὡς θέο-πεμπτά τινα δωρήματα (οὐ γαρ ειπειν θεμιτὸν ανθρωπινα) ἀθρόα ἐς ἑαυτὸν ἔσπασε, δια τοῦτο, οἷς ἔχει καλοις, ἅπαντας ἀει νικᾶ, καὶ ὑπὲρ ὧν οὐκ εχει, ωσπερεὶ καταβροντᾶ καὶ καταφέγγει τοὺς απ' αἰῶνος ρητορας·—καὶ θᾶττον

ἄν τις κεραυνοῖς φερομένοις αντανοίζαι τά ορίματα δύναιτο, ἢ ἀντοφθο
τοῖς ἐπαλλήλοις ἐκείνου παθέσιν.

"Forasmuch, however, as the beauties of the one (Hyperides) al
numerous, are not great in their kind,—are the productions of a pe
no excitement,—are inefficient, and such as permit the hearer to
unmoved, no one, for this reason, who reads Hyperides, is impas
But the other (D.) having acquired qualities of the highest orde
improved them to the highest pitch of perfection,—a tone of sublin
heart-felt passion,—a richness and copiousness of style,—justness
ception,—rapidity, and, in addition to these,—that which is his p
characteristic, a force and power which none have ever approac
having, I say, appropriated to himself in abundance these, which
rather to be deemed gifts vouchsafed to him from the Gods, than
qualities and excellences, he thereby always surpasses all competitio
as a compensation for his defects, he strikes down before him, as if
thunderbolt, all orators of all times, and consumes them in his bla
it would be easier for a man to behold, with undazzled eyes, the li
flashing upon him, than to contemplate without emotion his success
various passions."

Our readers will not fail to remark, (and therefore chiefly the q
is made)—we do not say what efforts the rhetorician makes,—but in
agonies and convulsions he throws himself to give, if possible, an a
idea of—what he seems to think, the more than human excell
this Orator.

Cicero, to whose admirable proficiency and transcendent powers
done no more than justice upon former occasions, and whose tes
upon a subject of this nature, is almost conclusive, never speaks of
predecessor and prototype, except in terms of the most unbounded
affected admiration.—"It is perfectly astonishing," says he, "ho
Demosthenes is superior to all the Grecian orators.—In Græcis ve
ribus quidèm admirabile est, quantum inter omnes unus excellat."
—Upon another occasion, he thus expresses himself. "Demosthe
may, without difficulty, pronounce to be absolutely perfect, and
in no particular."—* "Planè quidèm perfectum, et cui nihil admodù
Demosthenem facilè dixeris."—Not Plato more copious, not Lysi
simple, not Isocrates more finished, not Hyperides more acute,—no
itself more Attic.—† "Ne Athenas quidèm ipsas magis credo fuisse
Practically, and judging by experience, and with reference to a
which had existed, he pronounces him, as we have seen, absolutely
and declares "that what he (Cicero) was attempting, Demosthe
achieved."—† "Vides perfectò illum multa perficere,—nos multa c
illum posse, nos velle quocunque modo Causa postulet, dicere." I
occasion, he goes farther, and declares, as a reason for his preferenc
Demosthenes had formed himself upon a model of imaginary ex
and not of what had been known to exist in any person."—† "I
me longè omnibus unum anteferre Demosthenem, qui vim accom
ad eam, quam *sentiam*, Eloquentiam, non ad eam quam in ali
agnoverim." Elsewhere, he does indeed complain, and it is with
apology for his own unreasonableness,—"that he is so severe a c

* De Cl. Orat. † Orat.

so difficult to be pleased, as not even to be satisfied by Demosthenes himself; who, though he admits him "to be above all competition in every species of oratory, did not, as it seems, always *fill* his ears—so greedy and capacious were they, and always longing after something immense and infinite."—"Tantum abest ut nostra miremur, ut usque eò difficile ac morosi sumus, ut nobis non satisfaciat ipse Demosthenes; qui quanquam unus emineat in omni genere dicendi, tamen non semper *implet* aures meas: ità sunt *avidæ* et capaces, et semper aliquod immensum infinitumq. desiderent."* It seems then that this wonderful man, by his unwearied diligence,—his everlasting application to one single object,—by constant reflection and endless efforts,—in the Senate,—in the Forum,—at Athens,—at Tusculum, had been able to frame to himself, with difficulty nevertheless, a possible excellence,—an imaginary perfection,—a beau ideal, beyond the performances even of Demosthenes.—Just as no degree of dignity or of loveliness can be supposed to exist, beyond which art may not be supposed to reach; (the Olympian Jupiter was, we are told, a sort of concentrated Majesty,—and the Coan Venus a quintessence of Beauty);—or as in Geometry, no point, however remote, can be assigned, beyond which another may not be assumed in the vast and boundless regions of absolute space.

To Dionysius of Halicarnassus we refer the more willingly; because, though inferior to none in powers of composition himself, or of forming a judgment on others, he is, for some reason or other, less known and admired than he deserves. This distinguished Critic, as many of our readers are aware, commences his Treatise on "The Oratorical Power of Demosthenes," with a general definition of style, of which he (as does Cicero) makes three kinds: which are usually called, the Austere, the Florid, and the Middle. Having discussed the general subject, he proceeds to examine, with much acuteness and sagacity, the respective properties and merits of Lysias, Thucydides, Isocrates, and Plato. He then comes to Demosthenes, on whose account, he observes, the preliminary observations and criticisms had been introduced, and begins his notice of him by the following (to us, at least, we know not what M. Planche may think), untranslateable passage:

Τοιαύτην δὴ καταλαβὼν τὴν πολιτικὴν λέξιν ὁ Δημοσθένης, οὕτω κεκινημένην ποικίλως, καὶ τηλικούτοις εἰσελθὼν ἀνδράσιν, ἑνὸς ἕνεκα ἠξίωσε γενέσθαι ζηλωτὴς, ἥτε χαρακτῆρος, ἥτε ἀνδρὸς· ἡμιέργους τινὰς ἅπαντας ὑπόμενος εἶναι καὶ ἀτελεῖς· ἐξ ἁπάντων δ' αὐτῶν ὅσα κράτιστα καὶ χρησιμώτατα ἦν, ἐκλεγόμενος, συνύφαινε, καὶ μιὰν ἐκ πολλῶν διάλεκτον ἀπετέλει,—μεγαλοπρεπῆ, λιτήν· περιττὴν, ἀπέριττον·—ἐξηλλαγμένην, συνήθη·—παντηγυρικὴν, ἀληθίνην·—ἀυστηρὰν, ἱλαρὰν·—σύντονον, ἀνειμένην·—ἡδεῖαν, πικρὰν·—ἠθικὴν, παθητικήν· ὑδὲν διαλλάττουσαν τῶ μεμυθευμένω παρὰ τοῖς ἀρχαίοις ποιηταῖς Πρωτέως· ὃς ἅπασαν ἰδέαν μορφῆς ἀμοιγὴ μεταλαμβανεν· εἴτε θεὸς ἢ δαίμων τις ἐκεῖνος ἄρα ἦν, παρακρυόμενος ὀφεις τὰς ἀνθρωπίνας· εἴτε διαλέκτω ποικίλον δὴ χρῆμα ἐν ἀνδρὶ σοφῶ, πάσης ἀπαλλον ἀκοῆς· ὃ μᾶλλον ἄν τις εἰκάσειεν. Ἐγὼ μὲν τοιαύτην τινὰ δόξαν ὑπέρ της Δημοσθένους λέξεως χω, καὶ τ'' χαρακτῆρα τοῦτον ἀποδίδωμι ἀυτω, τ' ἐξ ἁπασης μικτον ἰδέας.†

"Demosthenes, then, finding the art of public speaking in this state,—so skilfully improved, and coming, as he did, after men of such excellence, did not condescend to become an imitator of any one style or person,—

* Orat.

† Dion. Hal. Vol. ii. page 273. Oxford Edition. Fol.

conceiving them all to be *half artists* and incomplete;—but, selecting from all whatever was the best and the most useful in each, he combined and, out of the many, made up a species of composition,—sublime, yet simple,—redundant, yet concise,—refined, yet idiomatic,—declamatory, yet natural,—austere, yet lively,—nervous, yet flowing,—soft, yet pungent,—temperate, yet passionate,—differing, in no respect, from Proteus, celebrated by the poets of old for being able to assume, without effort, every kind of shape;—whether he was some God or Dæmon who deceived the vision of mankind, or, as one would rather guess, some gifted person, accomplished in the power of speech, by which he imposed upon the senses of every hearer. Some such notion have I of the oratory of Demosthenes; and this description I give of it, that it is composed of every species."

In another part, he selects a passage (and a very beautiful one) from the Funeral Oration of Plato, and then one from that part of the Oration for the Crown, which includes the celebrated Apostrophe, and places them side by side. He then proceeds thus:

"There is surely no one, who has even a moderate skill in composition, and is not determined to wrangle and dispute, who must not readily admit, that the latter specimen as much exceeds the former, as the arms of warfare are superior to those which are used in shows and spectacles,—as real figures to shadows,—or as the bodies of men trained up in air and exercise are to those which have been rocked and dandled in confinement and luxury."

Οὐδείς ἐστιν ὅς οὐχ ὁμολογήσειν εἰ μόνον ἔχοι μετρίαν αἴσθησιν περὶ λόγους, καὶ μήτε βάσκανος, ἢ μίτε δύσερις τις, ἔτω διαφέρειν τὴν ἀρτίως παραληθεῖσαν λέξιν τῆς προτέρας, ὅσω διαλλάττει πολεμιστήρια μὲν ὅπλα πομπευτηρίων, ἀληθιναὶ δὲ ὄψεις εἰδώλων, ἐν ἡλίω δὲ καὶ πόνοις τεθραμμένα σώματα τῶν σκιὰς καὶ ῥαιθύμους διωκόντων.*

The preference here given, our readers will observe, is over no less a writer than the one, of whom it has been said, that if the Gods spoke Greek, which, if we had any faith in the Polytheism of antiquity, we should believe they did,—without doubt Jupiter would adopt his style. Again, (and it shall be our last extract), after saying, that when he reads Isocrates he feels himself in a composed and tranquil state, not unlike that which is induced by soft music, he goes on thus:

Ὅταν δὲ Δημοσθένους τινὰ λάβω λόγων, ἐνθουσιῶ τε, καὶ δεῦρο κἀκεῖσε ἄγομαι, πάθος ἕτερον ἐξ ἑτέρου μεταλαμβάνων·—ἀπιστῶν, ἀγωνιῶν, δεδιώς, καταφρονῶν, μισῶν, ἐλεῶν εὐνοῶν, ὀργιζόμενος, φθονῶν,—ἅπαντα τὰ πάθη μεταλαμβάνων, ὅσα κρατεῖν ἀνθρωπίνης γνώμης.†

"But when I take up one of the orations of Demosthenes, I am wrought up to a pitch of enthusiasm, and am hurried backwards and forwards, and assume one passion after another,—distrusting,—labouring,—fearing,—despising,—hating,—now moved with compassion, now with good-will,—sometimes with anger, and sometimes with envy,—taking up, in succession, every passion that sways the human breast."

We cannot go farther. Our readers will, at once, recognize in the description which this admirable writer, who is worthy of being a Commentator on Demosthenes, gives of his own hurried and varied emotions, the very effects which Cicero, in his glowing panegyric upon Eloquence, as-

* *Dion. Hal.* Vol ii. page 298. Oxford Edition. Fol.
† *Ibid.* Vol. ii. page 298.

ribes to the power of speech. Dionysius concludes by asking, if, at such distance of time from the transactions themselves, when all interest has ong ago subsided, such marvellous impressions are made by the bare perusal,—What must have been the effect upon the contemporary Athenians nd strangers who flocked to hear the Orator defend his own and his country's cause,—and that, too, with a force and energy of action which is dmitted to have been foremost, if possible, amidst his numerous and transendent qualifications?*—"What," said Æschines to the Rhodians, applauding the recital of the speech which caused his banishment,—"What if you had heard *the monster* himself?" Τί δὲ, εἰ αὐτῦ τῦ θηρίυ ἀκηκόειτε!

After perusing these testimonials, to which addition might be made at pleasure, from persons of the highest authority,—themselves at once judges and masters of composition, if such ever existed, the first question which suggests itself is,—where are discoverable these astonishing properties,—these dispensations of the Divinity?—In what part of the Speech does the thunderbolt reside? By what peculiar arrangement—by what laborious and artificial structure—by what display of ornament, has the Orator contrived to attract such unbounded and passionate commendation?—To which our classical readers are aware that we must answer, that these praises have been bestowed upon compositions remarkable for simplicity, in the whole of which, we will venture to say, not one single ornament (for its own sake) is to be found; in which there are no splendid patches; where a vulgar appetite for tropes, figures and metaphors (no matter how introduced) must remain unsatisfied;—where, though the composition is so highly wrought, that one of the critics, to whom we have referred, bestows a whole page upon a sentence of a dozen words, to show the delicacy of its structure, and the disorder which would ensue upon the slightest alteration or transposition of any of its parts, yet would no one suppose that to the mind of Demosthenes was ever present more than one idea,—his subject, and nothing but his subject. Not that we would be supposed as flying in the face of such a body of criticism:—we perfectly agree with it, and are aware that, when apparently unadorned, he is adorned the most; but we notice this general abstemiousness observable in the manner of Demosthenes, not merely as peculiar to his character, but, in some degree, as illustrative of his powers. The less imposing and attractive he is upon a superficial observation, the more of substance must there be to justify such commendations from such judges. The truth is, that this vigour,—this tension,—this sublimity, of which we read so much, is not discoverable in detached parts,—in striking and brilliant passages, but in the effect of the whole. The Spirit and Power and Rapidity, which are so justly celebrated, and which, in the perusal of his Orations, we assuredly perceive and feel, are the Soul, which dwells in no particular part, but which pervades and vivifies the whole mass.

> *Spiritus intus alit, totamque infusa per artus*
> *Mens agitat molem, et magno se corpore miscet.*—Æn. vi.

To judge fairly, we must take the whole piece. The "ex pede Herculem"—if ever an admissible rule of criticism in the case to which it is applied, which we much doubt, assuredly furnishes no means of judging of the merits of Demosthenes. An attempt to give the effect of any oration by a selection, or the merit of the whole by splendid passages, would be as hopeless as to

* Demosthenem ferunt ei, qui quæsivisset quid primum esset in dicendo,—actionem,—quid secundum, idem,—et idem tertium respondisse. *Cic. de Cl. Orat.*

produce an adequate idea of the bounding elasticity,—the matchless symmetry and ethereal attitude of the entire Apollo, by the production of a finger or an ear.

Some of the smaller Orations of Demosthenes,—and those too, which have contributed not a little to his reputation (the Philippics we mean), might be selected, in which not one ornament (in the ordinary sense of the word) or figure of speech is discoverable. A certain studied temperance and downright homeliness of manner, and a choice of matter illustrating and enforcing his view of the subject, and never above it, pervade the whole,—mixed up, indeed, with an earnestness, zeal, force and passion, which account for their celebrity.—Even in the Oration for the Crown,—the most perfect, undoubtedly, and comprehending in it the excellences of the rest, though every species of weapon in the oratorical armoury is employed,—poetical description,—indignant exaggeration,—inflammatory declamation, and bold apostrophe, yet is there not an instance, we will venture to say, (and we appeal to those of our readers the most confidently who have studied him best), in which they appear to be ostentatiously introduced, or in which they are not sustained by the surrounding passages of the speech. They, indeed, more nearly resemble an occasional and accidental inflammation of the fervid and electric torrent which the orator is pouring on his hearers, than foreign and adventitious lights brought forward for mere purposes of shining and display. The sublime appeal to the manes of the heroes of Marathon and Platæa, to which we shall not be suspected of referring, in order to bestow, for the thousandth time, unnecessary commendation, or to compare it, as we have seen Dionysius did, with any effort of human composition, we notice for a different object. It is, perhaps, one of the boldest and most excessive, and, from the constant reference to it, we must suppose, one of the most successful of his figures. Those, however, who will take up the speech at that part where Demosthenes describes the jealousy and distrust which rankled between the Athenians and Thebans before the battle of Cheronæa, the removal of which formed one of the most successful feats of his policy and eloquence, and will pursue his lofty appeals to national honour, and the deeds of their ancestors, which called upon the Athenians, if necessary, rather to fall in a struggle for liberty and glory, than to pursue inglorious security in obedience to Philip;—those, we say, who follow up the preceding passages with any thing of an adequate spirit, will feel themselves, from the tone of excitement and elevation which surround it, upon a level with the sublimity of this most celebrated apostrophe. Let this passage, then, have its reputation: we shall not attempt to add to it; but we call upon our readers, when they feel, by actual experiment, how little this part *stands out* from the rest, to reflect what must be the tone of the surrounding parts to sustain what, if taken by itself, must be deemed such extravagance and excess.

In adverting to the apparently natural growth of ornament in the Orations of Demosthenes, and pointing it out as a proof of their excellence, we must not omit to notice how different is the conduct of his antagonists and rivals in this particular.—Æschines, whose general good taste is undoubted, in the concluding paragraph of his Oration, after having dwelt upon the laws, the breach of which by Ctesiphon formed the strength of his case (and nothing could be stronger), in the treatment of which subject he had been, of course, plain and simple and didactic, by design, without any *previous excitement* to justify it, breaks out, all at once, into this exclamation

then (I call you to witness—ye Earth, and Sun, and Virtue, and In-
and Education, by which we distinguish what is honourable) have
and given my help; if adequately, and in a manner worthy of the
on of the laws,—as I wished;—if imperfectly, then only as I have
able."—Εγὼ μέν ὖν, ὦ Γῆ, καὶ Ἥλιε, καὶ Ἀρετὴ, καὶ Συνέσις, καὶ
α, ᾗ διαγινώσκομεν τα καλα, etc.—Who does not perceive, that this
appeal to bodies and qualities, which had nothing to do with his
lar subject, and hardly with any other, is a mere oratorical flourish?
ingly, we find that Demosthenes, in his reply upon him, ridicules
atured and misplaced apostrophe, and charges Æschines with con-
g the controversy between them as an affair *of the lungs*, and under
ea, bawling and mouthing ὦ Γῆ, etc. etc. like a tragedy hero.—The
observations apply, perhaps with more justice,—certainly more fre-
y, to Cicero's style,—or, rather to passages which, though the ad-
on of schoolboys, are unquestionably the most faulty, and from which,
ad not redeemed himself by the great body of his Orations, he would
have commanded the extraordinary admiration of more severe judges.
Oration for Marcellus, in returning thanks to Cæsar for sparing him,
storing him to his honours, he breaks out,—"By heavens, the very
of this Senate-house are impatient to express their gratitude to you,
Cæsar," etc.—"Parietes, mediusfidiùs C. Cæsar, ut mihi videtur,
Curiæ gratias tibi agere gestiunt," etc.—In one of his Orations against
, we have the following animated, and tolerably *sustained*, but ne-
less rhetorical and *professional* passage—"Should I paint the horrors
scene,—not to Roman citizens, not to the allies of our state,—not to
who have ever heard of the Roman name,—not even to men, but to
creatures; or, *to go further*, should I lift up my voice in the most
e solitude, to the rocks and mountains, yet should I surely see those
and inanimate parts of nature moved with terror and indignation, at
ital of so enormous an action." *Hume's Transl.*—"Quod si hæc non
os Romanos, non ad aliquos amicos nostræ civitati, non ad eos qui
Romani nomen audissent; denique si non ad homines, verùm ad
; aut etiam, *ut longiùs progrediar*, si in aliquâ desertissimâ solitudine
a et ad scopulos hæc conqueri et deplorare vellem, tamen omnia muta
nanima tantâ et tam indignâ rerum atrocitate commoverentur."—We
are, that there is all that composition can do to *carry this off;* and
is excitement also—but the artist shows himself too strongly. But
would have expected from the second orator in the world, in the full
sion of his powers, in a passage of no irritation,—a mere literary sub-
-in praise of the poets, and his client one of the number, the following
e declamation?—"Rocks and deserts answer to their voice; savage
ers are arrested by their song, and stand still;—shall we, formed as
by the best instruction, refuse to be moved by the power of song?"
axa et solitudines voci respondent; bestiæ sæpe immanes cantu flec-
atque consistunt;—nos, instituti rebus optimis, poetarum voce non
mur?"—From these, and innumerable other instances which might be
d, but from which, we repeat, it would be most unjust to form a
ent of Cicero, it is quite manifest, that his art is much more upon the
e; that he is much more ostentatious than Demosthenes; and that, in
nstances, sound criticism must often disapprove; as, indeed, we find
mortal orator himself pronouncing sentence, at a more advanced period
judgment, *against some* early and fanciful, but highly-wrought pas-

sages of his own, from their very excess, and because too far removed from the business and bosoms of men,—minùs aptæ rebus agendis.

The next question is,—How is the ascendancy of Demosthenes to be accounted for?—We are aware of the fearful extent of this inquiry, and must confine ourselves within certain limits.—The language, rich as it is, undoubtedly, and copious and powerful,—expressing the varieties of moods, and tenses, and cases by most artificial and elegant inflexions, without the aid of our useful, but untuneful monosyllables,—will, shall, would, could, should, etc,—with the delicacy of compound words, which frequently assign qualifications and degrees to expressions, which, with us, are general and indefinite (to fear, to love, etc. means any quantity of the sensation, and is, *of itself*, indeterminate)—the peculiarity of the middle voice partaking of the active and passive nature;—this language, we doubt not, is an ingredient in the case, but we think overrated, and too much relied upon in considering this subject.

The true solution of this phenomenon is to be looked for, we believe, in the singular state and condition of Greece, and of Athens more particularly.—A republic of independent nations, differing from each other in their particular habits and institutions, but united for purposes of general safety,—burning with the most anxious and jealous desire of surpassing each other;—brought into frequent contact and collision upon set and solemn occasions of Religion—of Games—of Spectacles;—nursed and pampered into the most unbounded and bigotted nationality by the achievements of their ancestors,—a nationality kept alive by Poetry, by Oratory,—by Monuments and Inscriptions;—impressed with an unshaken belief (not very far removed from the truth), that whatever was great and good, and virtuous and splendid, centered in, and was confined to their own territory:—such a people were continually goaded and stimulated to exertion by the most intense rivalry and impatient thirst for glory. The very narrowness of their limits, to which, in their firm persuasion, no accession of importance or of value would have been made, if the rest of the world had been added, by facilitating frequent intercourse, served only to condense the spirit.—The eager controversy for victory at their games,—the anxiety and interest in the spectators, and the infinite applause which was showered down upon the victors, serve to illustrate the course and tendency of our remarks, of which we purpose only to give our readers a taste, without pursuing them in all their details.—"Why do you not die, Diagoras," said a spectator at the Olympic Games to the father of two victorious sons,—"Why do you not die,—for you cannot become a God?"—"Moriri Diagora, neque enim in cœlum accensurus es." In a nation composed of such materials, and in such a constant strife for eminence and superiority, the Athenians were, unquestionably, the foremost in the race of fame,—and that too of literary fame. We forbear to notice other particulars, which are only, incidentally, to our present purpose, and come at once to the study of Oratory. Not merely from what they have left us, which would justify *an inference* of their superiority in the art, but from the *direct* testimony of Demosthenes himself, given in the most unsuspicious and undesigning manner, it appears that such was the contemporary opinion respecting them. When he spoke for the Crown, Greece came and listened to him. This ascendancy we must, of course, attribute not merely to the peculiar aptitude of this most ingenious and lively people for making *a proficiency*, but to the vigour and earnestness of the pursuit. Eloquence

was the road to honours and distinction; and the competitors for them outstripped each other in proportion to their acquirement and success. Now this we take to be the solution. "Honos alit artes," says Cicero most truly, 'omnesque incenduntur ad studia gloriâ;" and the quantity of exertion is sure to be in proportion to the ardency of the love of fame. And as in Greece, generally, and particularly at Athens, the intensity of this glorious passion was, for the reasons we have generally alluded to, greater we believe than it ever was in any other country, it would only be reasonable to expect, and accordingly we are informed, that there were greater exertions made in cultivating public speaking, than there can have been anywhere else,—and this accounts for excellence.—Our readers are aware, that Fielding has *proved satisfactorily*, in his dry and humorous manner, that an author will write something better, for knowing something of his subject; but we are persuaded that our readers will not require us to make out, by regular deduction, that a man who employs his whole life in one pursuit, is likely to excel another who applies only one-tenth part of the time to it.

If our limits would allow us, we should abstain from entering into particulars of the *midnight lamp* and labours of Demosthenes. Cicero abounds in them, and Plutarch still more. We will confine ourselves to one slight circumstance. He could not, it seems, pronounce the first letter of his own profession, the *r* in Rhetor; a letter, by the way, which sticks in the throats of no inconsiderable part of the inhabitants of this empire. How few, we would ask, amongst us, even in the educated classes, who have once been fairly infected with this impediment, have the courage and resolution to conquer a defect,—unpleasant in conversation, but, for any of the higher exertions of elocution, fatal? Yet Demosthenes, we are told, by some means or other (we wish we had an easier receipt than his, for the sake of some of our nearest English neighbours) contrived, by perseverance, to vanquish the difficulty, and to articulate the stubborn guttural *most plainly*. "Exercitatione fecisse, ut *plenissimè* diceret!" Cicero's exertions were equal. His Life is before us in his works; and from them it appears, that he literally never said, or did, or thought of any thing else but in what manner to improve himself in oratory. The consequence has been, that if the world should last ten times as long as it has done already, we believe he never will be surpassed in mere composition.

When Demosthenes and Cicero concur expressly upon any subject connected with eloquence, he must be a bold man who differs from them. Now the former, in his Oration for the Crown, in the only passage in which he speaks of his own talent, and the latter in his principal Treatise, declares that *the audience* forms the speaker. With reference to Demosthenes, Cicero observes of the Athenians, "that their judgment was always correct and genuine; so that an orator, who courted their approbation, never durst venture to use a single unauthorized or offensive expression."—"Semper oratorum eloquentiæ moderatrix fuit auditorum prudentia." And again, of the Athenians, in the same passage—"Semper fuit prudens sincerumq. judicium, nihil ut possent nisi incorruptum audire et elegans. Eorum religioni cum serviret orator, nullum verbum insolens, nullum odiosum ponere audebat."—*Orat.*

After this, we will not stop to discuss the qualities of the Athenian *Mob*, as contrasted with the British Senate, or incur the hazard of a Breach of Privilege, *by any opinion* we might express;—but this at least is certain,

that in one most essential particular affecting the very business of a speaker, Demosthenes had a manifest advantage, in possessing an audience perfectly open to persuasion. Whatever may be thought of the wisdom of such a government, it furnished materials most fit for eloquence to work upon. The people, themselves the legislators, if convinced by what they heard, manifested their conviction by instant adoption. The power of the orator was confessed,—the effect immediate,—his triumph complete. Now, let us see how the case is in the British House of Commons, which, from the spirit of inquiry amongst our countrymen,—their love of liberty, the parent and nurse of eloquence,—their information, as well as from the freedom of debate, which has obtained there for more than a century—and, above all, from the weighty and interesting subjects of discussion, must be considered the principal theatre for oratory in modern times. In that assembly, then, can any Member, judging from experience and observation, reasonably hope to produce that effect, which Cicero justly considers so honourable and so gratifying—"mentes impellere quò velit, unde autem velit, deducere?"—May not the Division usually be predicted before the commencement of the debate?—Are not the opinions of honourable Members securely deposited in their heads, or in their pockets, or in some place of security into which Eloquence cannot penetrate? Is it not a fact, of obvious and indisputable notoriety, that the greatest speakers on both sides of the question (and they cannot both be right) do frequently exhibit their powers without obtaining a single convert—without procuring a single vote? And can the same animation,—the same energy,—and, in one word, the same eloquence be expected, where there is no possible chance of producing (that which is the primary object—the obvious use—the legitimate end of all speaking)—conviction, and conviction manifested by the overt act of adopting or rejecting the measure which the orator recommends, or from which he dissuades?—If it be said that, as to the effect within doors, this may be true; the speaker may no doubt, in one sense, consider himself, by a sort of reflex operation, as convincing the distant inhabitants of Cumberland or Cornwall.—But so may a writer composing in his closet: and surely it cannot be said, (as assuredly it has never yet been supposed,) that such an obscure and remote anticipation of we know not what success, can be compared to the spirit-stirring effect—the electrical excitement of a numerous, attentive, and above all, a *convertible* audience.

In many respects, the Trial by Jury, as practised in this country, seems much better calculated to elicit and encourage this admirable talent. Their integrity—their impartiality—their openness, approaching to facility, to impression, are all strong excitements to exertion, and calculated to lead to success. The nature of the subjects, indeed, which come before them, so generally incapable of ornament, and devoid of interest, and the peculiar study of those who address them,—a study which, though Burke says (we know not how truly) it does more to quicken and invigorate the understanding than all other sciences put together, is an enemy to good taste and composition, and often seems to thrive best without them,—these, undoubtedly, are serious objections. Yet we have seen, from the speeches of Lord Erskine, both public and private, and since, from a defence of an alleged libel upon the subject of military punishments by Mr. Brougham, what might be expected if subjects of general interest and discussion could *be constantly* submitted to a tribunal so impartial and assailable. Upon

the merits of Lord Erskine's Speeches, we have delivered our deliberate opinion, and shall not proceed again over the same ground. In those of a particular description, in which feeling and passion are more immediately concerned, nothing can exceed the delicacy and tenderness with which he sometimes describes scenes of domestic endearment and felicity, or the lofty tone of indignation with which he lashes and scourges their invaders. On other occasions, he brings forward circumstances of an opposite description with equal effect and energy. In one particular case, where he represents his client the defendant, by every previous understanding between themselves,—by plighted faith,—by every virtuous and honourable attachment and implied engagement, as the husband of the plaintiff's wife, whatever forms or ceremonies might have been employed to give an appearance to the contrary, and then brings the plaintiff forward as the violator, and makes him the defendant,—the whole conception is in a strain of boldness, and executed with a degree of vigour worthy of Demosthenes himself. But we have adverted again to these admirable Speeches, chiefly for the sake of an observation connected with our present subject, which arises very forcibly from a perusal of his last and highest effort,—the defence of Stockdale. We are persuaded, that if Lord Erskine's exertions had been confined to the two Houses of Parliament, he never would have produced any thing half so excellent as his Speeches generally;—nor, if our Indian policy had been discussed before Lords or Commons, could he have produced *that*. Nobody required more, nor benefited more largely, from the accompanying sensations of his audience, which are, in truth, the support and food of an orator.* He *felt* his ground inch by inch. Never could he have been elevated to the pitch of that most extraordinary, most poetical and sublime passage, so entirely in the tone of Antiquity, (we mean the introduction of the Savage in his Speech,) by the cold, and, comparatively, unmeaning, "*Hear-hims*" of an assembly which would not be convinced (so far as conviction is manifested by conduct) "though one rose from the dead." He loved to domineer over the wills and affections of men, not for mere purposes of empty admiration, but to gain them over to his side—*to gain his cause*. This, when he was addressing the Jury, *he did;* and, what is beyond comparison the highest of all possible stimulants, *he saw and felt* that he was doing at the time. He tells us so, or rather he told them so at the moment. Secure of this point, but not satisfied, and not permitting the advantage gained to be even a stage and resting-place in his lofty career;—animated by success, and conscious of his strength,—in the midst of universal inflammation—of his audience and of himself, he proceeded to deliver that victorious and triumphant passage, which contributed, doubtless, largely to the deliverance of his client, and will remain an everlasting monument of his own glory, whilst the name of England and its language shall endure.—"What," we can only add with Æschines,—"what if we had heard him?"

Large, however, and ample as have been our commendations of this celebrated oration, we cannot conclude (though at the utmost verge of our limits) without observing that no speaker has approached so nearly, in general resemblance and manner, to Demosthenes, as Mr. Fox. No politician, we believe, and few scholars, understood and admired the old master more perfectly. Many striking properties and qualities were the same in

* Cicero remarks this, in the conduct of Demosthenes in his Oration for the Crown.

both. A certain sincerity and open-heartedness of manner,—an appa entire and thorough conviction of being in the right,—an everlastin suit of, and entire devotion to the subject, to the seeming neglec forgetfulness of every thing else,—an abrupt tone of vehemenc indignation,—a steadfast love of freedom, and corresponding hatred pression in all its forms,—a natural and idiomatic style,—vigour, argu power—these were characteristics equally of the Greek and English c Even in the details, in their hurried and hasty transitions,—in the of parentheses to get rid of minor topics as they proceed, and in the g structure of sentences, it would not be difficult to point out fr similarity.*

MACHIAVELLI.†

On the Works and Character of Machiavelli.

Those who have attended to the practice of our literary tribunal, a aware that, by means of certain legal fictions similar to those of minster Hall, we are frequently enabled to take cognizance of case beyond the sphere of our original jurisdiction. We need hardly say, fore, that, in the present instance, M. Périer is merely a Richard Roe his name is used for the sole purpose of bringing Machiavelli into c and that he will not be mentioned in any subsequent stage of the ceedings.

We doubt whether any name in literary history be so generally as that of the man whose character and writings we now propose to co The terms in which he is commonly described, would seem to impo he was the Tempter, the Evil Principle, the discoverer of ambitio revenge, the original inventor of perjury; that, before the publication fatal *Prince*, there had never been a hypocrite, a tyrant, or a tra simulated virtue or a convenient crime. One writer gravely assur that Maurice of Saxony learned all his fraudulent policy from that exe volume. Another remarks, that, since it was translated into Turkis Sultans have been more addicted than formerly to the custom of stra their brothers. Our own foolish Lord Lyttelton charges the poor Flo with the manifold treasons of the House of Guise, and the massacre Bartholomew. Several authors have hinted that the Gunpowder Pl be primarily attributed to his doctrines, and seem to think that his ought to be substituted for that of Guy Faux, in those processions by the ingenuous youth of England annually commemorate the preservat the Three Estates. The Church of Rome has pronounced his works ac things. Nor have our own countrymen been backward in testifying opinion of his merits. Out of his surname they have coined an epith a knave—and out of his christian name a synonyme for the Devil. ‡

* The eloquence of Demosthenes and of the Greek Orators form the subject of two el Essays in subsequent Nos. of the E. Review. See Vol. xxxvi. pages 82 and 453. The been attributed to the auth r of the foregoing *critique*.

† *Œuvres* complètes de Machiavel, traduites par J. V. Périer. Paris, 1825.—Vol. xl 259. 1827.

‡ Nick Machiavel had ne'er a trick,
Tho' he gave his name to our old Nick.—Hudibras, part iii. canto i.

But, we believe, there is a schism on this subject among the Antiquarians.

It is indeed scarcely possible for any person, not well acquainted with the history and literature of Italy, to read, without horror and amazement, the celebrated treatise which has brought so much obloquy on the name of Machiavelli. Such a display of wickedness, naked, yet not ashamed, such cool, judicious, scientific atrocity, seem rather to belong to a fiend than to the most depraved of men. Principles which the most hardened ruffian would scarcely hint to his most trusted accomplice, or avow, without the disguise of some palliating sophism, even to his own mind, are professed without the slightest circumlocution, and assumed as the fundamental axioms of all political science.

It is not strange that ordinary readers should regard the author of such a book as the most depraved and shameless of human beings. Wise men, however, have always been inclined to look with great suspicion on the angels and demons of the multitude: and in the present instance, several circumstances have led even superficial observers to question the justice of the vulgar decision. It is notorious that Machiavelli was, through life, a zealous republican. In the same year in which he composed his manual of King-craft, he suffered imprisonment and torture in the cause of public liberty. It seems inconceivable that the martyr of freedom should have designedly acted as the apostle of tyranny. Several eminent writers have, therefore, endeavoured to detect, in this unfortunate performance, some concealed meaning, more consistent with the character and conduct of the author than that which appears at the first glance.

One hypothesis is, that Machiavelli intended to practise on the young Lorenzo de' Medici, a fraud similar to that which Sunderland is said to have employed against our James the Second,—that he urged his pupil to violent and perfidious measures, as the surest means of accelerating the moment of deliverance and revenge. Another supposition, which Lord Bacon seems to countenance, is, that the treatise was merely a piece of grave irony, intended to warn nations against the arts of ambitious men. It would be easy to show that neither of these solutions is consistent with many passages in the *Prince* itself. But the most decisive refutation is that which is furnished by the other works of Machiavelli. In all the writings which he gave to the public, and in all those which the research of editors has, in the course of three centuries, discovered—in his Comedies, designed for the entertainment of the multitude—in his Comments on Livy, intended for the perusal of the most enthusiastic patriots of Florence—in his History, inscribed to one of the most amiable and estimable of the Popes—in his Public Despatches—in his Private Memoranda, the same obliquity of moral principle for which the *Prince* is so severely censured is more or less discernible. We doubt whether it would be possible to find, in all the many volumes of his compositions, a single expression indicating that dissimulation and treachery had ever struck him as discreditable.

After this, it may seem ridiculous to say, that we are acquainted with few writings which exhibit so much elevation of sentiment, so pure and warm a zeal for the public good, or so just a view of the duties and rights of citizens, as those of Machiavelli. Yet so it is. And even from the *Prince* itself, we could select many passages in support of this remark. To a reader of our age and country, this inconsistency is, at first, perfectly bewildering. The whole man seems to be an enigma—a grotesque assemblage of incongruous qualities—selfishness and generosity, cruelty and benevolence, craft and simplicity, abject villany and romantic heroism. One

sentence is such as a veteran diplomatist would scarcely write in cipher for the direction of his most confidential spy; the next seems to be extracted from a theme composed by an ardent schoolboy on the death of Leonidas. An act of dexterous perfidy, and an act of patriotic self-devotion, call forth the same kind and the same degree of respectful admiration. The moral sensibility of the writer seems at once to be morbidly obtuse and morbidly acute. Two characters altogether dissimilar are united in him. They are not merely joined, but interwoven. They are the warp and the woof of his mind; and their combination, like that of the variegated threads in shot silk, gives to the whole texture a glancing and ever-changing appearance. The explanation might have been easy, if he had been a very weak or a very affected man. But he was evidently neither the one nor the other. His works prove, beyond all contradiction, that his understanding was strong, his taste pure, and his sense of the ridiculous exquisitely keen.

This is strange—and yet the strangest is behind. There is no reason whatever to think, that those amongst whom he lived saw any thing shocking or incongruous in his writings. Abundant proofs remain of the high estimation in which both his works and his person were held by the most respectable among his contemporaries. Clement the Seventh patronized the publication of those very books which the Council of Trent, in the following generation, pronounced unfit for the perusal of Christians. Some members of the democratical party censured the Secretary for dedicating the *Prince* to a patron who bore the unpopular name of Medici. But to those immoral doctrines, which have since called forth such severe reprehensions, no exception appears to have been taken. The cry against them was first raised beyond the Alps—and seems to have been heard with amazement in Italy. The earliest assailant, as far as we are aware, was a countryman of our own, Cardinal Pole. The author of the Anti-Machiavelli was a French Protestant.

It is, therefore, in the state of moral feeling among the Italians of those times, that we must seek for the real explanation of what seems most mysterious in the life and writings of this remarkable man. As this is a subject which suggests many interesting considerations, both political and metaphysical, we shall make no apology for discussing it at some length.

During the gloomy and disastrous centuries which followed the downfall of the Roman Empire, Italy had preserved, in a far greater degree than any other part of Western Europe, the traces of ancient civilization. The night which descended upon her was the night of an Arctic summer:—the dawn began to reappear before the last reflection of the preceding sunset had faded from the horizon. It was in the time of the French Merovingians, and of the Saxon Heptarchy, that ignorance and ferocity seemed to have done their worst. Yet even then the Neapolitan provinces, recognizing the authority of the Eastern Empire, preserved something of Eastern knowledge and refinement. Rome, protected by the sacred character of its Pontiffs, enjoyed at least comparative security and repose. Even in those regions where the sanguinary Lombards had fixed their monarchy, there was incomparably more of wealth, of information, of physical comfort, and of social order, than could be found in Gaul, Britain, or Germany.

That which most distinguished Italy from the neighbouring countries, was the importance which the population of the towns, from a very early period, began to acquire. Some cities, founded in wild and remote situations, *by fugitives* who had escaped from the rage of the barbarians, pre-

served their freedom by their obscurity, till they became able to preserve it by their power. Others seem to have retained, under all the changing dynasties of invaders, under Odoacer and Theodoric, Narses and Alboin, the municipal institutions which had been conferred on them by the liberal policy of the Great Republic. In provinces which the central government was too feeble either to protect or to oppress, these institutions first acquired stability and vigour. The citizens, defended by their walls, and governed by their own magistrates and their own bye-laws, enjoyed a considerable share of republican independence. Thus a strong democratic spirit was called into action. The Carlovingian sovereigns were too imbecile to subdue it. The generous policy of Otho encouraged it. It might perhaps have been suppressed by a close coalition between the Church and the Empire. It was fostered and invigorated by their disputes. In the twelfth century it attained its full vigour, and, after a long and doubtful conflict, triumphed over the abilities and courage of the Swabian Princes.

The assistance of the Ecclesiastical Power had greatly contributed to the success of the Guelfs. That success would, however, have been a doubtful good, if its only effect had been to substitute a moral for a political servitude, to exalt the Popes at the expense of the Cæsars. Happily the public mind of Italy had long contained the seeds of free opinions, which were now rapidly developed by the genial influence of free institutions. The people of that country had observed the whole machinery of the church, its saints and its miracles, its lofty pretensions and its splendid ceremonial, its worthless blessings and its harmless curses, too long and too closely to be duped. They stood behind the scenes on which others were gazing with childish awe and interest. They witnessed the arrangement of the pullies, and the manufacture of the thunders. They saw the natural faces, and heard the natural voices of the actors. Distant nations looked on the Pope as the vicegerent of the Almighty, the Oracle of the All-wise, the umpire from whose decisions, in the disputes either of theologians or of kings, no Christian ought to appeal. The Italians were acquainted with all the follies of his youth, and with all the dishonest arts by which he had attained power. They knew how often he had employed the keys of the Church to release himself from the most sacred engagements, and its wealth to pamper his mistresses and nephews. The doctrines and rites of the established religion they treated with decent reverence. But though they still called themselves Catholics, they had ceased to be Papists. Those spiritual arms which carried terror into the palaces and camps of the proudest sovereigns, excited only their contempt. When Alexander commanded our Henry the Second to submit to the lash before the tomb of a rebellious subject, he was himself an exile. The Romans, apprehending that he entertained designs against their liberties, had driven him from their city; and, though he solemnly promised to confine himself for the future to his spiritual functions, they still refused to re-admit him.

In every other part of Europe, a large and powerful privileged class trampled on the people, and defied the government. But, in the most flourishing parts of Italy, the feudal nobles were reduced to comparative insignificance. In some districts they took shelter under the protection of the powerful commonwealths which they were unable to oppose, and gradually sunk into the mass of burghers. In others they possessed great influence; but it was an influence widely different from that which was exercised by the *chieftains of the Transalpine* kingdoms. They were not petty princes,

but eminent citizens. Instead of strengthening their fastnesses among the mountains, they embellished their palaces in the market-place. The state of society in the Neapolitan dominions, and in some parts of the Ecclesiastical State, more nearly resembled that which existed in the great monarchies of Europe. But the Governments of Lombardy and Tuscany, through all their revolutions, preserved a different character. A people, when assembled in a town, is far more formidable to its rulers than when dispersed over a wide extent of country. The most arbitrary of the Cæsars found it necessary to feed and divert the inhabitants of their unwieldy capital at the expense of the provinces. The citizens of Madrid have more than once besieged their sovereign in his own palace, and extorted from him the most humiliating concessions. The Sultans have often been compelled to propitiate the furious rabble of Constantinople with the head of an unpopular Vizier. From the same cause there was a certain tinge of democracy in the monarchies and aristocracies of Northern Italy.

Thus liberty, partially indeed and transiently, revisited Italy; and with liberty came commerce and empire, science and taste, all the comforts and all the ornaments of life. The Crusades, from which the inhabitants of other countries gained nothing but relics and wounds, brought the rising commonwealths of the Adriatic and Tyrrhene seas a large increase of wealth, dominion and knowledge. Their moral and their geographical position enabled them to profit alike by the barbarism of the West, and by the civilization of the East. Their ships covered every sea. Their factories rose on every shore. Their money-changers set their tables in every city. Manufactures flourished. Banks were established. The operations of the commercial machine were facilitated by many useful and beautiful inventions. We doubt whether any country of Europe, our own perhaps excepted, have at the present time reached so high a point of wealth and civilization as some parts of Italy had attained four hundred years ago. Historians rarely descend to those details from which alone the real state of a community can be collected. Hence posterity is too often deceived by the vague hyperboles of poets and rhetoricians, who mistake the splendour of a court for the happiness of a people. Fortunately, John Villani has given us an ample and precise account of the state of Florence in the earlier part of the fourteenth century. The revenue of the Republic amounted to three hundred thousand florins, a sum which, allowing for the depreciation of the precious metals, was at least equivalent to six hundred thousand pounds sterling; a larger sum than England and Ireland, two centuries ago, yielded annually to Elizabeth—a larger sum than, according to any computation which we have seen, the Grand Duke of Tuscany now derives from a territory of much greater extent. The manufacture of wool alone employed two hundred factories and thirty thousand workmen. The cloth annually produced sold, at an average, for twelve hundred thousand florins; a sum fairly equal, in exchangeable value, to two millions and a half of our money. Four hundred thousand florins were annually coined. Eighty banks conducted the commercial operations, not of Florence only, but of all Europe. The transactions of these establishments were sometimes of a magnitude which may surprise even the contemporaries of the Barings and the Rothschilds. Two houses advanced to Edward the Third of England upwards of three hundred thousand marks, at a time when the *mark contained* more silver than fifty shillings of the present day, and when *the value of silver* was more than quadruple of what it now is. The city

environs contained a hundred and seventy thousand inhabitants. In
ious schools about ten thousand children were taught to read; twelve
d studied arithmetic; six hundred received a learned education.
ogress of elegant literature and of the fine arts was proportioned to
the public prosperity. Under the despotic successors of Augustus,
ields of the intellect had been turned into arid wastes, still marked
formal boundaries, still retaining the traces of old cultivation, but
; neither flowers nor fruit. The deluge of barbarism came. It swept
l the landmarks. It obliterated all the signs of former tillage. But
zed while it devastated. When it receded, the wilderness was as
len of God, rejoicing on every side, laughing, clapping its hands,
forth in spontaneous abundance, every thing brilliant, or fragrant,
ishing. A new language, characterized by simple sweetness and
:nergy, had attained its perfection. No tongue ever furnished more
s and vivid tints to poetry; nor was it long before a poet appeared,
ew how to employ them. Early in the fourteenth century came
e Divine Comedy, beyond comparison the greatest work of imagi-
which had appeared since the poems of Homer. The following
on produced indeed no second Dante; but it was eminently distin-
by general intellectual activity. The study of the Latin writers had
een wholly neglected in Italy. But Petrarch introduced a more
d, liberal, and elegant scholarship; and communicated to his coun-
that enthusiasm for the literature, the history, and the antiquities
e, which divided his own heart with a frigid mistress and a more
[use. Boccacio turned their attention to the more sublime and grace-
els of Greece.

ı this time, the admiration of learning and genius became almost an
among the people of Italy. Kings and republics, Cardinals and
vied with each other in honouring and flattering Petrarch. Embas-
n rival states solicited the honour of his instructions. His coronation
the Court of Naples and the people of Rome as much as the most
nt political transaction could have done. To collect books and an-
:o found professorships, to patronize men of learning, became almost
ıl fashions among the great. The spirit of literary research allied
that of commercial enterprise. Every place to which the merchant
of Florence extended their gigantic traffic, from the bazaars of the
o the monasteries of the Clyde, was ransacked for medals and ma-
s. Architecture, painting and sculpture, were munificently encou-
Indeed it would be difficult to name an Italian of eminence, during
od of which we speak, who, whatever may have been his general
:r, did not at least affect a love of letters and of the arts.
vledge and public prosperity continued to advance together. Both
their meridian in the age of Lorenzo the Magnificent. We cannot
rom quoting the splendid passage, in which the Tuscan Thucydides
s the state of Italy at that period:—" Ridotta tutta in somma pace
ıillità, coltivata non meno ne' luoghi più montuosi e più sterili che
ınure e regioni più fertili, nè sottoposta ad altro imperio che de' suoi
ni, non solo era abbondantissima d' abitatori e di ricchezze; ma il-
sommamente dalla magnificenza di molti principi, dallo splendore
› nobilissime e bellissime città, dalla sedia e maestà della religione,
l' uo*mini prestantissimi* nell' administrazione delle cose pubbliche, e
ni molto nobili in tutte le scienze, ed in qualunque arte preclara ed

industriosa."* When we peruse this just and splendid description, we can scarcely persuade ourselves that we are reading of times in which the annals of England and France present us only with a frightful spectacle of poverty, barbarity, and ignorance. From the oppressions of illiterate masters, and the sufferings of a brutalized peasantry, it is delightful to turn to the opulent and enlightened States of Italy—to the vast and magnificent cities, the ports, the arsenals, the villas, the museums, the libraries, the marts filled with every article of comfort or luxury, the manufactories swarming with artisans, the Apennines covered with rich cultivation up to their very summits, the Po wafting the harvests of Lombardy to the granaries of Venice, and carrying back the silks of Bengal and the furs of Siberia to the palaces of Milan. With peculiar pleasure, every cultivated mind must repose on the fair, the happy, the glorious Florence—on the halls which rung with the mirth of Pulci—the cell where twinkled the midnight lamp of Politian—the statues on which the young eye of Michael Angelo glared with the frenzy of a kindred inspiration—the gardens in which Lorenzo meditated some sparkling song for the May-day dance of the Etrurian virgins. Alas, for the beautiful city! Alas! for the wit and the learning, the genius and the love!

"Le donne, i cavalier', gli affanni, gli agi,
Che 'nè in voglia va amore e cortesia,
Là dove i cuor son fatti si malvagi."†

A time was at hand, when all the seven vials of the Apocalypse were to be poured forth and shaken out over those pleasant countries—a time of slaughter, famine, beggary, infamy, slavery, despair!

In the Italian States, as in many natural bodies, untimely decrepitude was the penalty of precocious maturity. Their early greatness, and their early decline, are principally to be attributed to the same cause—the preponderance which the towns acquired in the political system.

In a community of hunters or of shepherds, every man easily and necessarily becomes a soldier. His ordinary avocations are perfectly compatible with all the duties of military service. However remote may be the expedition on which he is bound, he finds it easy to transport with him the stock from which he derives his subsistence. The whole people is an army; the whole year a march. Such was the state of society which facilitated the gigantic conquests of Attila and Timour.

But a people which subsists by the cultivation of the earth is in a very different situation. The husbandman is bound to the soil on which he labours. A long campaign would be ruinous to him. Still his pursuits are such as give to his frame both the active and the passive strength necessary to a soldier. Nor do they, at least in the infancy of agricultural science, demand his uninterrupted attention. At particular times of the year he is almost wholly unemployed, and can, without injury to himself, afford the time necessary for a short expedition. Thus the legions of Rome were supplied during its earlier wars. The season during which the farms did not require the presence of the cultivators sufficed for a short inroad and a battle. These operations, too frequently interrupted to produce decisive results, yet served to keep up among the people a degree of discipline and courage which rendered them, not only secure, but formidable. The archers and billmen of the middle ages, who, with provisions for forty

* Guicciardini, lib. i.
† Dante. Purgatorio, xiv.

lays at their backs, left the fields for the camp, were troops of the same lescription.

But, when commerce and manufactures begin to flourish, a great change akes place. The sedentary habits of the desk and the loom render the exertions and hardships of war insupportable. The occupations of traders and artisans require their constant presence and attention. In such a community there is little superfluous time; but there is generally much superfluous money. Some members of the society are, therefore, hired to relieve he rest from a task inconsistent with their habits and engagements.

The history of Greece is, in this, as in many other respects, the best commentary on the history of Italy. Five hundred years before the Christian era, the citizens of the republics round the Ægean Sea formed perhaps the finest militia that ever existed. As wealth and refinement advanced, the system underwent a gradual alteration. The Ionian States were the first in which commerce and the arts were cultivated—and the first in which the ancient discipline decayed. Within eighty years after the battle of Platæa, mercenary troops were everywhere plying for battles and sieges. In the time of Demosthenes, it was scarcely possible to persuade or compel the Athenians to enlist for foreign service. The laws of Lycurgus prohibited trade and manufactures. The Spartans, therefore, continued to form a national force long after their neighbours had begun to hire soldiers. But their military spirit declined with their singular institutions. In the second century, Greece contained only one nation of warriors, the savage highlanders of Ætolia, who were at least ten generations behind their countrymen in civilization and intelligence.

All the causes which produced these effects among the Greeks, acted still more strongly on the modern Italians. Instead of a power like Sparta, in its nature warlike, they had amongst them an ecclesiastical state, in its nature pacific. Where there are numerous slaves, every freeman is induced by the strongest motives to familiarize himself with the use of arms. The commonwealths of Italy did not, like those of Greece, swarm with thousands of these household enemies. Lastly, the mode in which military operations were conducted during the prosperous times of Italy, was peculiarly unfavourable to the formation of an efficient militia. Men covered with iron from head to foot, armed with ponderous lances, and mounted on horses of the largest breed, were considered as composing the strength of an army. The infantry was regarded as comparatively worthless, and was neglected till it became really so. These tactics maintained their ground for centuries in most parts of Europe. That foot soldiers could withstand the charge of heavy cavalry was thought utterly impossible, till, towards the close of the fifteenth century, the rude mountaineers of Switzerland dissolved the spell, and astounded the most experienced generals, by receiving the dreaded shock on an impenetrable forest of pikes.

The use of the Grecian spear, the Roman sword, or the modern bayonet, might be acquired with comparative ease. But nothing short of the daily exercise of years could train the man-at-arms to support his ponderous panoply, and manage his unwieldy weapon. Throughout Europe this most important branch of war became a separate profession. Beyond the Alps, indeed, though a profession, it was not generally a trade. It was the duty and the amusement of a large class of country gentlemen. It was the service by which they held their lands, and the diversion by which, in the absence of mental resources, they beguiled their leisure. But in

the Northern States of Italy, as we have already remarked, the growin power of the cities, where it had not exterminated this order of men, h completely changed their habits. Here, therefore, the practice of emplo ing mercenaries became universal, at a time when it was almost unkno in other countries.

When war becomes the trade of a separate class, the least danger course left to a government is to form that class into a standing army. is scarcely possible, that men can pass their lives in the service of a sin state, without feeling some interest in its greatness. Its victories are t victories. Its defeats are their defeats. The contract loses something o mercantile character. The services of the soldier are considered as the eff of patriotic zeal, his pay as the tribute of national gratitude. To betray power which employs him, to be even remiss in its service, are in his the most atrocious and degrading of crimes.

When the princes and commonwealths of Italy began to use hired tro their wisest course would have been to form separate military establishm Unhappily this was not done. The mercenary warriors of the Penin instead of being attached to the service of different powers, were rega as the common property of all. The connexion between the state an defenders was reduced to the most simple and naked traffic. The advent brought his horse, his weapons, his strength, and his experience, int market. Whether the King of Naples or the Duke of Milan, the Po the Signory of Florence, struck the bargain, was to him a matter of pe indifference. He was for the highest wages and the longest term. W the campaign for which he had contracted was finished, there was ne law nor punctilio to prevent him from instantly turning his arms ag his late masters. The soldier was altogether disjoined from the citizen from the subject.

The natural consequences followed. Left to the conduct of men neither loved those whom they defended nor hated those whom they posed—who were often bound by stronger ties to the army against w they fought than the state which they served—who lost by the termin of the conflict, and gained by its prolongation, war completely chang character. Every man came into the field of battle impressed wit knowledge that, in a few days, he might be taking the pay of the p against which he was then employed, and fighting by the side of his en against his associates. The strongest interest and the strongest feelings curred to mitigate the hostility of those who had lately been brethr arms, and who might soon be brethren in arms once more. Their com profession was a bond of union not to be forgotten even when they engaged in the service of contending parties. Hence it was that opera languid and indecisive beyond any recorded in history, marches and c termarches, pillaging expeditions and blockades, bloodless capitulation equally bloodless combats, make up the military history of Italy durin course of nearly two centuries. Mighty armies fight from sunrise to su A great victory is won. Thousands of prisoners are taken; and har life is lost! A pitched battle seems to have been really less dangerous an ordinary civil tumult.

Courage was now no longer necessary even to the military char Men grew old in camps, and acquired the highest renown by their wa achievements, without being once required to face serious danger. political consequences are too well known. The richest and most enligh

part of the world was left, undefended, to the assaults of every barbarous invader—to the brutality of Switzerland, the insolence of France, and the fierce rapacity of Arragon. The moral effects which followed from this state of things, were still more remarkable.

Among the rude nations which lay beyond the Alps, valour was absolutely indispensable. Without it, none could be eminent; few could be secure. Cowardice was, therefore, naturally considered as the foulest reproach. Among the polished Italians, enriched by commerce, governed by law, and passionately attached to literature, every thing was done by superiority of intelligence. Their very wars, more pacific than the peace of their neighbours, required rather civil than military qualifications. Hence, while courage was the point of honour in other countries, ingenuity became the point of honour in Italy.

From these principles were deduced, by processes strictly analogous, two opposite systems of fashionable morality.—Through the greater part of Europe, the vices, which peculiarly belong to timid dispositions, and which are the natural defence of weakness, fraud and hypocrisy, have always been most disreputable. On the other hand, the excesses of haughty and daring spirits have been treated with indulgence, and even with respect. The Italians regarded with corresponding lenity those crimes which require self-command, address, quick observation, fertile invention, and profound knowledge of human nature.

Such a prince as our Henry the Fifth would have been the idol of the North. The follies of his youth, the selfish and desolating ambition of his manhood, the Lollards roasted at slow fires, the prisoners massacred on the field of battle, the expiring lease of priestcraft renewed for another century, the dreadful legacy of a causeless and hopeless war, bequeathed to a people who had no interest in its event, everything is forgotten, but the victory of Agincourt! Francis Sforza, on the other hand, was the model of the Italian hero. He made his employers and his rivals alike his tools. He first overpowered his open enemies by the help of faithless allies; he then armed himself against his allies with the spoils taken from his enemies. By his incomparable dexterity, he raised himself from the precarious and dependent situation of a military adventurer to the first throne of Italy. To such a man much was forgiven—hollow friendship, ungenerous enmity, violated faith. Such are the opposite errors which men commit, when their morality is not a science, but a taste; when they abandon eternal principles for accidental associations.

We have illustrated our meaning by an instance taken from history. We will select another from fiction. Othello murders his wife; he gives orders for the murder of his lieutenant; he ends by murdering himself. Yet he never loses the esteem and affection of a Northern reader—his intrepid and ardent spirit redeeming every thing. The unsuspecting confidence with which he listens to his adviser, the agony with which he shrinks from the thought of shame, the tempest of passion with which he commits his crimes, and the haughty fearlessness with which he avows them, give an extraordinary interest to his character. Iago, on the contrary, is the object of universal loathing. Many are inclined to suspect that Shakspeare has been seduced into an exaggeration unusual with him, and has drawn a monster who has no archetype in human nature. Now we suspect, that an Italian audience, in the fifteenth century, would have felt very differently. Othello would have inspired nothing but detestation and contempt. The folly with

which he trusts to the friendly professions of a man whose promotion he had obstructed—the credulity with which he takes unsupported assertions, and trivial circumstances, for unanswerable proofs,—the violence with which he silences the exculpation till the exculpation can only aggravate his misery, would have excited the abhorrence and disgust of the spectators. The conduct of Iago they would assuredly have condemned; but they would have condemned it as we condemn that of his victim. Something of interest and respect would have mingled with their disapprobation. The readiness of his wit, the clearness of his judgment, the skill with which he penetrates the dispositions of others and conceals his own, would have insured to him a certain portion of their esteem.

So wide was the difference between the Italians and their neighbours. A similar difference existed between the Greeks of the second century before Christ, and their masters the Romans. The conquerors, brave and resolute, faithful to their engagements, and strongly influenced by religious feelings, were, at the same time, ignorant, arbitrary, and cruel. With the vanquished people were deposited all the art, the science, and the literature of the Western world. In poetry, in philosophy, in painting, in architecture, in sculpture, they had no rivals. Their manners were polished, their perceptions acute, their invention ready; they were tolerant, affable, humane. But of courage and sincerity they were almost utterly destitute. The rude warriors who had subdued them, consoled themselves for their intellectual inferiority, by remarking that knowledge and taste seemed only to make men atheists, cowards, and slaves. The distinction long continued to be strongly marked, and furnished an admirable subject for the fierce sarcasms of Juvenal.

The citizen of an Italian commonwealth was the Greek of the time of Juvenal, and the Greek of the time of Pericles, joined in one. Like the former, he was timid and pliable, artful and unscrupulous. But, like the latter, he had a country. Its independence and prosperity were dear to him. If his character were degraded by some mean crimes, it was, on the other hand, ennobled by public spirit, and by an honourable ambition.

A vice sanctioned by the general opinion is merely a vice. The evil terminates in itself. A vice condemned by the general opinion produces a pernicious effect on the whole character. The former is a local malady, the latter a constitutional taint. When the reputation of the offender is lost, he too often flings the remains of his virtue after it in despair. The Highland gentleman who, a century ago, lived by taking black mail from his neighbours, committed the same crime for which Wild was accompanied to Tyburn by the huzzas of two hundred thousand people. But there can be no doubt that he was a much less depraved man than Wild. The deed for which Mrs. Brownrigg was hanged sinks into nothing, when compared with the conduct of the Roman who treated the public to a hundred pair of gladiators. Yet we should probably wrong such a Roman if we supposed that his disposition was so cruel as that of Mrs. Brownrigg. In our own country, a woman forfeits her place in society, by what, in a man, is too commonly considered as an honourable distinction, and, at worst, as a venial error. The consequence is notorious. The moral principle of a woman is frequently more impaired by a single lapse from virtue, than that of a man by twenty years of intrigue. Classical antiquity would furnish us with *instances stronger*, if possible, than those to which we have referred.

We must apply this principle to the case before us. Habits of dis-

simulation and falsehood, no doubt, mark a man of our age and country as utterly worthless and abandoned. But it by no means follows that a similar judgment would be just in the case of an Italian of the middle ages. On the contrary, we frequently find those faults which we are accustomed to consider as certain indications of a mind altogether depraved, in company with great and good qualities, with generosity, with benevolence, with disinterestedness. From such a state of society, Palamedes, in the admirable dialogue of Hume, might have drawn illustrations of his theory as striking as any of those with which Fourli furnished him. These are not, we well know, the lessons which historians are generally most careful to teach, or readers most willing to learn. But they are not therefore useless. How Philip disposed his troops at Chæronea, where Hannibal crossed the Alps, whether Mary blew up Darnley, or Siquier shot Charles the Twelfth, and ten thousand other questions of the same description, are in themselves unimportant. The inquiry may amuse us, but the decision leaves us no wiser. He alone reads history aright, who, observing how powerfully circumstances influence the feelings and opinions of men, how often vices pass into virtues, and paradoxes into axioms, learns to distinguish what is accidental and transitory in human nature, from what is essential and immutable.

In this respect no history suggests more important reflections than that of the Tuscan and Lombard commonwealths. The character of the Italian statesman seems, at first sight, a collection of contradictions, a phantom as monstrous as the portress of hell in Milton, half divinity, half snake, majestic and beautiful above, grovelling and poisonous below. We see a man, whose thoughts and words have no connexion with each other; who never hesitates at an oath when he wishes to seduce, who never wants a pretext when he is inclined to betray. His cruelties spring, not from the heat of blood, or the insanity of uncontrolled power, but from deep and cool meditation. His passions, like well-trained troops, are impetuous by rule, and in their most headstrong fury never forget the discipline to which they have been accustomed. His whole soul is occupied with vast and complicated schemes of ambition. Yet his aspect and language exhibit nothing but philosophic moderation. Hatred and revenge eat into his heart:—Yet every look is a cordial smile, every gesture a familiar caress. He never excites the suspicion of his adversary by petty provocations. His purpose is disclosed only when it is accomplished. His face is unruffled, his speech is courteous, till vigilance is laid asleep, till a vital point is exposed, till a sure aim is taken; and then he strikes—for the first and last time. Military courage, the boast of the sottish German, the frivolous and prating Frenchman, the romantic and arrogant Spaniard, he neither possesses nor values. He shuns danger—not because he is insensible to shame, but because, in the society in which he lives, timidity has ceased to be shameful. To do an injury openly is, in his estimation, as wicked as to do it secretly—and far less profitable. With him the most honourable means are—the surest, the speediest, and the darkest. He cannot comprehend how a man should scruple to deceive him whom he does not scruple to destroy. He would think it madness to declare open hostilities against a rival whom he might stab in a friendly embrace, or poison in a consecrated wafer.

Yet this man, black with the vices which *we* consider as most loathsome—traitor, hypocrite, coward, assassin—was by no means destitute even of those virtues which we generally consider as indicating superior elevation of

character. In civil courage, in perseverance, in presence of mind, those barbarous warriors, who were foremost in the battle or the breach, were far his inferiors. Even the dangers which he avoided, with a caution almost pusillanimous, never confused his perceptions, never paralysed his inventive faculties, never wrung out one secret from his ready tongue and his inscrutable brow. Though a dangerous enemy, and a still more dangerous accomplice, he was a just and beneficent ruler. With so much unfairness in his policy, there was an extraordinary degree of fairness in his intellect. Indifferent to truth in the transactions of life, he was honestly devoted to the pursuit of truth in the researches of speculation. Wanton cruelty was not in his nature. On the contrary, where no political object was at stake, his disposition was soft and humane. The susceptibility of his nerves, and the activity of his imagination, inclined him to sympathize with the feelings of others, and to delight in the charities and courtesies of social life. Perpetually descending to actions which might seem to mark a mind diseased through all its faculties, he had nevertheless an exquisite sensibility, both for the natural and the moral sublime, for every graceful and every lofty conception. Habits of petty intrigue and dissimulation might have rendered him incapable of great general views, but that the expanding effect of his philosophical studies counteracted the narrowing tendency. He had the keenest enjoyment of wit, eloquence, and poetry. The fine arts profited alike by the severity of his judgment, and the liberality of his patronage. The portraits of some of the remarkable Italians of those times, are perfectly in harmony with this description. Ample and majestic foreheads; brows strong and dark, but not frowning; eyes of which the calm full gaze, while it expresses nothing, seems to discern every thing; cheeks pale with thought and sedentary habits; lips formed with feminine delicacy, but compressed with more than masculine decision—mark out men at once enterprising and apprehensive; men equally skilled in detecting the purposes of others, and in concealing their own; men who must have been formidable enemies and unsafe allies; but men, at the same time, whose tempers were mild and equable, and who possessed an amplitude and subtlety of mind which would have rendered them eminent either in active or in contemplative life, and fitted them either to govern or to instruct mankind.

Every age and every nation has certain characteristic vices, which prevail almost universally, which scarcely any person scruples to avow, and which even rigid moralists but faintly censure. Succeeding generations change the fashion of their morals, with their hats and their coaches; take some other kind of wickedness under their patronage, and wonder at the depravity of their ancestors. Nor is this all. Posterity, that high court of appeal, which is never tired of eulogizing its own justice and discernment, acts, on such occasions, like a Roman dictator after a general mutiny: Finding the delinquents too numerous to be all punished, it selects some of them at hazard, to bear the whole penalty of an offence in which they are not more deeply implicated than those who escape. Whether decimation be a convenient mode of military execution, we know not; but we solemnly protest against the introduction of such a principle into the philosophy of history.

In the present instance, the lot has fallen on Machiavelli; a man whose public conduct was upright and honourable, whose views of morality, where they differed from those of the persons around him, seemed to have differed *for the better,* and whose only fault was, that, having adopted some of the

maxims then generally received, he arranged them more luminously, and expressed them more forcibly, than any other writer.

Having now, we hope, in some degree cleared the personal character of Machiavelli, we come to the consideration of his works. As a poet, he is not entitled to a very high place. The Decennali are merely abstracts of the history of his own times in rhyme. The style and versification are sedulously modelled on those of Dante. But the manner of Dante, like that of every other great original poet, was suited only to his own genius, and to his own subject. The distorted and rugged diction which gives to his unearthly imagery a yet more unearthly character, and seems to proceed from a man labouring to express that which is inexpressible, is at once mean and extravagant, when misemployed by an imitator. The moral poems are in every point superior. That on Fortune, in particular, and that on Opportunity, exhibit both justness of thought and fertility of fancy. The Golden Ass has nothing but the name in common with the Romance of Apuleius—a book which, in spite of its irregular plan and its detestable style, is among the most fascinating in the Latin language, and in which the merits of Le Sage and Radcliffe, Bunyan and Crébillon, are singularly united. The Poem of Machiavelli, which is evidently unfinished, is carefully copied from the earlier Cantos of the Inferno. The writer loses himself in a wood. He is terrified by monsters, and relieved by a beautiful damsel. His protectress conducts him to a large menagerie of emblematical beasts, whose peculiarities are described at length. The manner as well as the plan of the Divine Comedy is carefully imitated. Whole lines are transferred from it. But they no longer produce their wonted effect. Virgil advises the husbandman who removes a plant from one spot to another to mark its bearings on the cork, and to place it in the same position with regard to the different points of the heaven in which it formerly stood. A similar care is necessary in poetical transplantation. Where it is neglected, we perpetually see the flowers of language, which have bloomed on one soil, wither on another. Yet the Golden Ass is not altogether destitute of merit. There is considerable ingenuity in the allegory, and some vivid colouring in the descriptions.

The Comedies deserve more attention. The Mandragola, in particular, is superior to the best of Goldoni, and inferior only to the best of Molière. It is the work of a man who, if he had devoted himself to the drama, would probably have attained the highest eminence, and produced a permanent and salutary effect on the national taste. This we infer, not so much from the degree, as from the kind of its excellence. There are compositions which indicate still greater talent, and which are perused with still greater delight, from which we should have drawn very different conclusions. Books quite worthless are quite harmless. The sure sign of the general decline of an art is the frequent occurrence, not of deformity, but of misplaced beauty. In general, tragedy is corrupted by eloquence, and comedy by wit.

The real object of the drama is the exhibition of the human character. This, we conceive, is no arbitrary canon, originating in local and temporary associations like those which regulate the number of acts in a play, or of syllables in a line. It is the very essence of a species of a composition, in which every idea is coloured by passing through the medium of an imagined mind. To this fundamental law every other regulation is subordinate.

The situations which most signally develop character form the best plot. The mother tongue of the passions is the best style.

This principle, rightly understood, does not debar the poet from any grace of composition. There is no style in which some man may not, under some circumstances, express himself. There is therefore no style which the drama rejects, none which it does not occasionally require. It is in the discernment of place, of time, and of person, that the inferior artists fail. The brilliant rhodomontade of Mercutio, the elaborate declamation of Antony, are, where Shakspeare has placed them, natural and pleasing. But Dryden would have made Mercutio challenge Tybalt, in hyperboles as fanciful as those in which he describes the chariot of Mab. Corneille would have represented Antony as scolding and coaxing Cleopatra with all the measured rhetoric of a funeral oration.

No writers have injured the Comedy of England so deeply as Congreve and Sheridan. Both were men of splendid wit and polished taste. Unhappily they made all their characters in their own likeness. Their works bear the same relation to the legitimate drama which a transparency bears to a painting: no delicate touches:—no hues imperceptibly fading into each other:—the whole is lighted up with an universal glare. Outlines and tints are forgotten in the common blaze which illuminates all. The flowers and fruits of the intellect abound; but it is the abundance of a jungle, not of a garden—unwholesome, bewildering, unprofitable from its very plenty, rank from its very fragrance. Every fop, every boor, every valet, is a man of wit. The very butts and dupes, Tattle, Urkwould, Puff, Acres, outshine the whole Hôtel de Rambouillet. To prove the whole system of this school absurd, it is only necessary to apply the test which dissolved the enchanted Florimel—to place the true by the false Thalia, to contrast the most celebrated characters which have been drawn by the writers of whom we speak, with the Bastard in King John or the Nurse in Romeo and Juliet. It was not surely from want of wit that Shakspeare adopted so different a manner. Benedick and Beatrice throw Mirabel and Millamant into the shade. All the good sayings of the facetious hours of Absolute and Surface might have been clipped from the single character of Falstaff without being missed. It would have been easy for that fertile mind to have given Bardolph and Shallow as much wit as Prince Hal, and to have made Dogberry and Verges retort on each other in sparkling epigrams. But he knew, to use his own admirable language, that such indiscriminate prodigality was "*from* the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was, and is, to hold, as it were, the mirror up to Nature."

This digression will enable our readers to understand what we mean when we say that, in the Mandragola, Machiavelli has proved that he completely understood the nature of the dramatic art, and possessed talents which would have enabled him to excel in it. By the correct and vigorous delineation of human nature, it produces interest without a pleasing or skilful plot, and laughter without the least ambition of wit. The lover, not a very delicate or generous lover, and his adviser the parasite, are drawn with spirit. The hypocritical confessor is an admirable portrait. He is, if we mistake not, the original of Father Dominic, the best comic character of Dryden. But old Nicias is the glory of the piece. We cannot call to mind any thing that resembles him. The follies which Molière ridicules are *those of* affectation, not those of fatuity. Coxcombs and pedants, not

simpletons, are his game. Shakspeare has indeed a vast assortment of fools; but the precise species of which we speak, is not, if we remember right, to be found there. Shallow is a fool. But his animal spirits supply, to a certain degree, the place of cleverness. His talk is to that of Sir John what soda-water is to champagne. It has the effervescence, though not the body or the flavour. Slender and Sir Andrew Aguecheek are fools, troubled with an uneasy consciousness of their folly, which, in the latter, produces a most edifying meekness and docility, and in the former, awkwardness, obstinacy, and confusion. Cloten is an arrogant fool, Osric a foppish fool, Ajax a savage fool; but Nicias is, as Thersites says of Patroclus, a fool positive. His mind is occupied by no strong feeling; it takes every character, and retains none; its aspect is diversified, not by passion, but by faint and transitory semblances of passion, a mock joy, a mock fear, a mock love, a mock pride, which chase each other like shadows over its surface, and vanish as soon as they appear. He is just idiot enough to be an object, not of pity or horror, but of ridicule. He bears some resemblance to poor Calandrino, whose mishaps, as recounted by Boccacio, have made all Europe merry for more than four centuries. He perhaps resembles still more closely Simon de Villa, to whom Bruno and Buffalmacco promised the love of the Countess Civillari.* Nicias is, like Simon, of a learned profession; and the dignity with which he wears the doctoral fur, renders his absurdities infinitely more grotesque. The old Tuscan is the very language for such a being. Its peculiar simplicity gives even to the most forcible reasoning and the most brilliant wit an infantine air, generally delightful, but to a foreign reader sometimes a little ludicrous. Heroes and statesmen seem to lisp when they use it. It becomes Nicias incomparably, and renders all his silliness infinitely more silly.

We may add, that the verses with which the Mandragola is interspersed, appear to us to be the most spirited and correct of all that Machiavelli has written in metre. He seems to have entertained the same opinion; for he has introduced some of them in other places. The contemporaries of the author were not blind to the merits of this striking piece. It was acted at Florence with the greatest success. Leo the Tenth was among its admirers, and by his order it was represented at Rome.†

The Clizia is an imitation of the Casina of Plautus, which is itself an imitation of the lost *κληρουμένοι* of Diphilus. Plautus was, unquestionably, one of the best Latin writers. His works are copies; but they have in an extraordinary degree the air of originals. We infinitely prefer the slovenly exuberance of his fancy, and the clumsy vigour of his diction, to the artfully disguised poverty and elegant languor of Terence. But the Casina is by no means one of his best plays; nor is it one which offers great facilities to an imitator. The story is as alien from modern habits of life, as the manner in which it is developed from the modern fashion of composition. The lover remains in the country, and the heroine is locked up in her chamber during the whole action, leaving their fate to be decided by a foolish father, a cunning mother, and two knavish servants. Machiavelli has executed his task with judgment and taste. He has accommodated the

* Decameron, Giorn. viii. Nov. 9.

† Nothing can be more evident than that Paulus Jovius designates the Mandragola under the name of the Nicias. We should not have noticed what is so perfectly obvious, were it not that this natural and palpable *misnomer* has led the sagacious and industrious Bayle into a gross error.

plot to a different state of society, and has very dexterously connected it with the history of his own times. The relation of the trick put on the doting old lover is exquisitely humorous. It is far superior to the corresponding passage in the Latin comedy, and scarcely yields to the account which Falstaff gives of his ducking.

Two other comedies without titles, the one in prose, the other in verse, appear among the works of Machiavelli. The former is very short, lively enough, but of no great value. The latter we can scarcely believe to be genuine. Neither its merits nor its defects remind us of the reputed author. It was first printed in 1796, from a manuscript discovered in the celebrated library of the Strozzi. Its genuineness, if we have been rightly informed, is established solely by the comparison of hands. Our suspicions are strengthened by the circumstance, that the same manuscript contained a description of the plague of 1527, which has also, in consequence, been added to the works of Machiavelli. Of this last composition, the strongest external evidence would scarcely induce us to believe him guilty. Nothing was ever written more detestable, in matter and manner. The narrations, the jokes, the lamentations, are all the very worst of their respective kinds, at once trite and affected,—threadbare tinsel from the Rag-fairs and Monmouth-streets of literature. A foolish schoolboy might perhaps write it, and, after he had written it, think it much finer than the incomparable introduction of the Decameron. But that a shrewd statesman, whose earliest works are characterized by manliness of thought and language, should, at nearly sixty years of age, descend to such puerility, is utterly inconceivable.

The little Novel of Belphegor is pleasantly conceived, and pleasantly told. But the extravagance of the satire in some measure injures its effect. Machiavelli was unhappily married; and his wish to avenge his own cause and that of his brethren in misfortune, carried him beyond even the licence of fiction. Jonson seems to have combined some hints taken from this tale, with others from Boccacio, in the plot of *The Devil is an Ass*—a play which, though not the most highly finished of his compositions, is perhaps that which exhibits the strongest proofs of genius.

The political correspondence of Machiavelli, first published in 1767, is unquestionably genuine, and highly valuable. The unhappy circumstances in which his country was placed during the greater part of his public life, gave extraordinary encouragement to diplomatic talents. From the moment that Charles the Eighth descended from the Alps, the whole character of Italian politics was changed. The governments of the Peninsula ceased to form an independent system. Drawn from their old orbit by the attraction of the larger bodies which now approached them, they became mere satellites of France and Spain. All their disputes, internal and external, were decided by foreign influence. The contests of opposite factions were carried on, not as formerly in the Senate House, or in the marketplace, but in the antichambers of Louis and Ferdinand. Under these circumstances, the prosperity of the Italian States depended far more on the ability of their foreign agents, than on the conduct of those who were intrusted with the domestic administration. The ambassador had to discharge functions far more delicate than transmitting orders of knighthood, introducing tourists, or presenting his brethren with the homage of his high *consideration*. He was an advocate to whose management the dearest *interests of his* clients were intrusted, a spy clothed with an inviolable cha-

racter. Instead of consulting the dignity of those whom he represented, by a reserved manner and an ambiguous style, he was to plunge into all the intrigues of the court at which he resided, to discover and flatter every weakness of the prince who governed his employers, of the favourite who governed the prince, and of the lacquey who governed the favourite. He was to compliment the mistress and bribe the confessor, to panegyrize or supplicate, to laugh or weep, to accommodate himself to every caprice, to lull every suspicion, to treasure every hint, to be every thing, to observe every thing, to endure every thing. High as the art of political intrigue had been carried in Italy, these were times which required it all.

On these arduous errands Machiavelli was frequently employed. He was sent to treat with the King of the Romans, and with the Duke of Valentinois. He was twice ambassador at the Court of Rome, and thrice at that of France. In these missions, and in several others of inferior importance, he acquitted himself with great dexterity. His despatches form one of the most amusing and instructive collections extant. We meet with none of the mysterious jargon so common in modern state-papers, the flash-language of political robbers and sharpers. The narratives are clear and agreeably written; the remarks on men and things clever and judicious. The conversations are reported in a spirited and characteristic manner. We find ourselves introduced into the presence of the men who, during twenty eventful years, swayed the destinies of Europe. Their wit and their folly, their fretfulness and their merriment are exposed to us. We are admitted to overhear their chat, and to watch their familiar gestures. It is interesting and curious to recognize, in circumstances which elude the notice of historians, the feeble violence and shallow cunning of Louis the Twelfth; the bustling insignificance of Maximilian, cursed with an impotent pruriency for renown, rash yet timid, obstinate yet fickle, always in a hurry, yet always too late;—the fierce and haughty energy which gave dignity to the eccentricities of Julius;—the soft and graceful manners which masked the insatiable ambition and the implacable hatred of Borgia.

We have mentioned Borgia. It is impossible not to pause for a moment on the name of a man in whom the political morality of Italy was so strongly personified, partially blended with the sterner lineaments of the Spanish character. On two important occasions Machiavelli was admitted to his society; once, at the moment when his splendid villany achieved its most signal triumph, when he caught in one snare and crushed at one blow all his most formidable rivals; and again when, exhausted by disease and overwhelmed by misfortunes which no human prudence could have averted, he was the prisoner of the deadliest enemy of his house. These interviews between the greatest speculative and the greatest practical statesman of the age, are fully described in the correspondence, and form perhaps the most interesting part of it. From some passages in the *Prince*, and perhaps also from some indistinct traditions, several writers have supposed a connexion between those remarkable men much closer than ever existed. The Envoy has even been accused of prompting the crimes of the artful and merciless tyrant. But from the official documents it is clear that their intercourse, though ostensibly amicable, was in reality hostile. It cannot be doubted, however, that the imagination of Machiavelli was strongly impressed and his speculations on government coloured, by the observations which he made on the singular character, and equally singular fortunes, of a man *who, under such disadvantages*, had achieved such exploits; who, when

sensuality, varied through innumerable forms, could no longer stimulate his sated mind, found a more powerful and durable excitement in the intense thirst of empire and revenge;—who emerged from the sloth and luxury of the Roman purple, the first prince and general of the age;—who, trained in an unwarlike profession, formed a gallant army out of the dregs of an unwarlike people;—who, after acquiring sovereignty by destroying his enemies, acquired popularity by destroying his tools;—who had begun to employ for the most salutary ends the power which he had attained by the most atrocious means; who tolerated within the sphere of his iron despotism no plunderer or oppressor but himself;—and who fell at last amidst the mingled curses and regrets of a people of whom his genius had been the wonder, and might have been the salvation. Some of those crimes of Borgia which to us appear the most odious, would not, from causes which we have already considered, have struck an Italian of the fifteenth century with equal horror. Patriotic feeling also might induce Machiavelli to look with some indulgence and regret on the memory of the only leader who could have defended the independence of Italy against the confederate spoilers of Cambray.

On this subject Machiavelli felt most strongly. Indeed the expulsion of the foreign tyrants, and the restoration of that golden age which had preceded the irruption of Charles the Eighth, were projects which, at that time, fascinated all the master-spirits of Italy. The magnificent vision delighted the great but ill-regulated mind of Julius. It divided with manuscripts and sauces, painters and falcons, the attention of the frivolous Leo. It prompted the generous treason of Morone. It imparted a transient energy to the feeble mind and body of the last Sforza. It excited for one moment an honest ambition in the false heart of Pescara. Ferocity and insolence were not among the vices of the national character. To the discriminating cruelties of politicians, committed for great ends on select victims, the moral code of the Italians was too indulgent. But though they might have recourse to barbarity as an expedient, they did not require it as a stimulant. They turned with loathing from the atrocity of the strangers who seemed to love blood for its own sake; who, not content with subjugating, were impatient to destroy; who found a fiendish pleasure in razing magnificent cities, cutting the throats of enemies who cried for quarter, or suffocating an unarmed people by thousands in the caverns to which they had fled for safety. Such were the scenes which daily excited the terror and disgust of a people, amongst whom, till lately, the worst that a soldier had to fear in a pitched battle was the loss of his horse, and the expense of his ransom. The swinish intemperance of Switzerland, the wolfish avarice of Spain, the gross licentiousness of the French, indulged in violation of hospitality, of decency, of love itself, the wanton inhumanity which was common to all the invaders, had rendered them objects of deadly hatred to the inhabitants of the Peninsula.* The wealth which had been accumulated during centuries of prosperity and repose, was rapidly melting away. The intellectual superiority of the oppressed people only rendered them more keenly sensible of their political degradation. Literature and taste, indeed, still disguised with a flush of hectic loveliness and brilliancy the ravages of an incurable decay

* *The opening stanzas* of the Fourteenth Canto of the Orlando Furioso, give a frightful picture *of the state of Italy in those times.* Yet, strange to say, Ariosto is speaking of the conduct of those *who called themselves* Allies.

The iron had not yet entered into the soul. The time was not yet come when eloquence was to be gagged, and reason to be hoodwinked—when the harp of the poet was to be hung on the willows of Arno, and the right hand of the painter to forget its cunning. Yet a discerning eye might even then have seen that genius and learning would not long survive the state of things from which they had sprung—that the great men whose talents gave lustre to that melancholy period had been formed under the influence of happier days, and would leave no successors behind them. The times which shine with the greatest splendour in literary history are not always those to which the human mind is most indebted. Of this we may be convinced, by comparing the generation which follows them, with that which preceded them. The first fruits which are reaped under a bad system, often spring from seed sown under a good one. Thus it was, in some measure, with the Augustan age. Thus it was with the age of Raphael and Ariosto, of Aldus and Vida.

Machiavelli deeply regretted the misfortunes of his country, and clearly discerned the cause and the remedy. It was the military system of the Italian people which had extinguished their valour and discipline, and rendered their wealth an easy prey to every foreign plunderer. The Secretary projected a scheme, alike honourable to his heart and to his intellect, for abolishing the use of mercenary troops, and organizing a national militia.

The exertions which he made to effect this great object ought alone to rescue his name from obloquy. Though his situation and his habits were pacific, he studied with intense assiduity the theory of war. He made himself master of all its details. The Florentine government entered into his views. A council of war was appointed. Levies were decreed. The indefatigable minister flew from place to place, in order to superintend the execution of his design. The times were, in some respects, favourable to the experiment. The system of military tactics had undergone a great revolution. The cavalry was no longer considered as forming the strength of an army. The hours which a citizen could spare from his ordinary employments, though by no means sufficient to familiarize him with the exercise of a man-at-arms, might render him an useful foot-soldier. The dread of a foreign yoke, of plunder, massacre, and conflagration, might have conquered that repugnance to military pursuits, which both the industry and the idleness of great towns commonly generate. For a time the scheme promised well. The new troops acquitted themselves respectably in the field. Machiavelli looked with parental rapture on the success of his plan; and began to hope that the arms of Italy might once more be formidable to the barbarians of the Tagus and the Rhine. But the tide of misfortune came on before the barriers which should have withstood it were prepared. For a time, indeed, Florence might be considered as peculiarly fortunate. Famine and sword and pestilence had devastated the fertile plains and stately cities of the Po. All the curses denounced of old against Tyre seemed to have fallen on Venice. Her merchants already stood afar off, lamenting for their great city. The time seemed near when the sea-weed should overgrow her silent Rialto, and the fisherman wash his nets in her deserted arsenal. Naples had been four times conquered, and reconquered, by tyrants equally indifferent to its welfare, and equally greedy for *its spoils.* *Florence*, as yet, had only to endure degradation and *extortion, to submit to the* mandates of foreign powers, to buy over and

over again, at an enormous price, what was already justly her own—to return thanks for being wronged, and to ask pardon for being in the right. She was at length deprived of the blessings even of this infamous and servile repose. Her military and political institutions were swept away together. The Medici returned, in the train of foreign invaders, from their long exile. The policy of Machiavelli was abandoned; and his public services were requited with poverty, imprisonment, and torture.

The fallen statesman still clung to his project with unabated ardour. With the view of vindicating it from some popular objections, and of refuting some prevailing errors on the subject of military science, he wrote his seven books on the Art of War. This excellent work is in the form of a dialogue. The opinions of the writer are put into the mouth of Fabrizio Colonna, a powerful nobleman of the Ecclesiastical State, and an officer of distinguished merit in the service of the King of Spain. He visits Florence on his way from Lombardy to his own domains. He is invited to meet some friends at the house of Cosimo Rucellui, an aimable and accomplished young man, whose early death Machiavelli feelingly deplores. After partaking of an elegant entertainment, they retire from the heat into the most shady recesses of the garden. Fabrizio is struck by the sight of some uncommon plants. His host informs him that, though rare in modern days, they are frequently mentioned by the classical authors, and that his grandfather, like many other Italians, amused himself with practising the ancient methods of gardening. Fabrizio expresses his regret that those who, in later times, affected the manners of the old Romans, should select for imitation their most trifling pursuits. This leads to a conversation on the decline of military discipline, and on the best means of restoring it. The institution of the Florentine militia is ably defended; and several improvements are suggested in the details.

The Swiss and the Spaniards were, at that time, regarded as the best soldiers in Europe. The Swiss battalion consisted of pikemen, and bore a close resemblance to the Greek phalanx. The Spaniards, like the soldiers of Rome, were armed with the sword and the shield. The victories of Flaminius and Æmilius over the Macedonian kings seem to prove the superiority of the weapons used by the legions. The same experiment had been recently tried with the same result at the battle of Ravenna, one of those tremendous days into which human folly and wickedness compress the whole devastation of a famine or a plague. In that memorable conflict, the infantry of Arragon, the old companions of Gonsalvo, deserted by all their allies, hewed a passage through the thickest of the imperial pikes, and effected an unbroken retreat, in the face of the gendarmerie of De Foix, and the renowned artillery of Este. Fabrizio, or rather Machiavelli, proposes to combine the two systems, to arm the foremost lines with the pike, for the purpose of repulsing cavalry, and those in the rear with the sword, as being a weapon better adapted for every purpose. Throughout the work, the author expresses the highest admiration of the military science of the ancient Romans, and the greatest contempt for the maxims which had been in vogue amongst the Italian commanders of the preceding generation. He prefers infantry to cavalry, and fortified camps to fortified towns. He is inclined to substitute rapid movements and decisive engagements for the languid and dilatory operations of his countrymen. He attaches very little importance to the invention of gunpowder. Indeed he seems to think that it ought scarcely to produce any change in the mode of arming or of disposing troops.

The general testimony of historians, it must be allowed, seems to prove, that the ill-constructed and ill-served artillery of those times, though useful in a siege, was of little value on the field of battle.

Of the tactics of Machiavelli we will not venture to give an opinion: but we are certain that his book is most able and interesting. As a commentary on the history of his times, it is invaluable. The ingenuity, the grace, and the perspicuity of the style, and the eloquence and animation of particular passages, must give pleasure even to readers who take no interest in the subject.

The *Prince* and the Discourses on Livy were written after the fall of the Republican government. The former was dedicated to the young Lorenzo de' Medici. This circumstance seems to have disgusted the contemporaries of the writer far more than the doctrines which have rendered the name of the work odious in later times. It was considered as an indication of political apostasy. The fact however seems to have been, that Machiavelli, despairing of *the liberty* of Florence, was inclined to support any government which might preserve her *independence*. The interval which separated a democracy and a despotism, Soderini and Lorenzo, seemed to vanish when compared with the difference between the former and the present state of Italy, between the security, the opulence, and the repose which it had enjoyed under its native rulers, and the misery in which it had been plunged since the fatal year in which the first foreign tyrant had descended from the Alps. The noble and pathetic exhortation with which the *Prince* concludes, shows how strongly the writer felt upon this subject.

The *Prince* traces the progress of an ambitious Man, the Discourses the progress of an ambitious People. The same principles on which, in the former work, the elevation of an individual is explained, are applied, in the latter, to the longer duration and more complex interests of a society. To a modern statesman the form of the Discourses may appear to be puerile. In truth, Livy is not a historian on whom much reliance can be placed, even in cases where he must have possessed considerable means of information. And his first Decade, to which Machiavelli has confined himself, is scarcely entitled to more credit than our Chronicle of British Kings who reigned before the Roman invasion. But his commentator is indebted to him for little more than a few texts which he might as easily have extracted from the Vulgate or the Decameron. The whole train of thought is original.

On the peculiar immorality which has rendered the *Prince* unpopular, and which is almost equally discernible in the Discourses, we have already given our opinion at length. We have attempted to show that it belonged rather to the age than to the man, that it was a partial taint, and by no means implied general depravity. We cannot however deny that it is a great blemish, and that it considerably diminishes the pleasure which, in other respects, those works must afford to every intelligent mind.

It is, indeed, impossible to conceive a more healthful and vigorous constitution of the understanding than that which these works indicate. The qualities of the active and the contemplative statesman appear to have been blended, in the mind of the writer, into a rare and exquisite harmony. His skill in the details of business had not been acquired at the expense of his general powers. It had not rendered his mind less comprehensive; but it had served to correct his speculations, and to impart to them that vivid and practical character which so widely distinguishes them from the vague theories of most political philosophers.

Every man who has seen the world knows that nothing is so useless as a general maxim. If it be very moral and very true, it may serve for a copy to a charity-boy. If, like those of Rochefoucault, it be sparkling and whimsical, it may make an excellent motto for an essay. But few, indeed, of the many wise apophthegms which have been uttered, from the time of the Seven Sages of Greece to that of Poor Richard, have prevented a single foolish action. We give the highest and the most peculiar praise to the precepts of Machiavelli, when we say that they may frequently be of real use in regulating conduct—not so much because they are more just, or more profound, than those which might be culled from other authors, as because they can be more readily applied to the problems of real life.

There are errors in these works. But they are errors which a writer, situated like Machiavelli, could scarcely avoid. They arise, for the most part, from a single defect which appears to us to pervade his whole system. In his political scheme, the means had been more deeply considered than the ends. The great principle, that societies and laws exist only for the purpose of increasing the sum of private happiness, is not recognised with sufficient clearness. The good of the body, distinct from the good of the members, and sometimes hardly compatible with it, seems to be the object which he proposes to himself. Of all political fallacies, this has had the widest and the most mischievous operation. The state of society in the little commonwealths of Greece, the close connexion and natural dependence of the citizens, and the severity of the laws of war, tended to encourage an opinion which, under such circumstances, could hardly be called erroneous. The interests of every individual were inseparably bound up with those of the state. An invasion destroyed his corn-fields and vineyards, drove him from his home, and compelled him to encounter all the hardships of a military life. A peace restored him to security and comfort. A victory doubled the number of his slaves. A defeat perhaps made him a slave himself. When Pericles, in the Peloponnesian war, told the Athenians that, if their country triumphed, their private losses would speedily be repaired: but that, if their arms failed of success, every individual amongst them would probably be ruined, *—he spoke no more than the truth. He spoke to men whom the tribute of vanquished cities supplied with food and clothing, with the luxury of the bath and the amusements of the theatre, on whom the greatness of their country conferred rank, and before whom the members of less prosperous communities trembled;—and to men who, in case of a change in the public fortunes, would, at least, be deprived of every comfort and every distinction which they enjoyed. To be butchered on the smoking ruins of their city—to be dragged in chains to a slave-market—to see one child torn from them to dig in the quarries of Sicily, and another to guard the harems of Persepolis—those were the frequent and probable consequences of national calamities. Hence, among the Greeks, patriotism became a governing principle, or rather an ungovernable passion. Both their legislators and their philosophers took it for granted, that, in providing for the strength and greatness of the state, they sufficiently provided for the happiness of the people. The writers of the Roman empire lived under despots, into whose dominion a hundred nations were melted down, and whose gardens would have covered the little commonwealths of Phlius and Platæa. Yet they continued to employ the same language, and to rant

* Thucydides, ii. 62.

bout the duty of sacrificing every thing to a country to which they owed othing.

Causes similar to those which had influenced the disposition of the Greeks, perated powerfully on the less vigorous and daring character of the Italians. They, too, were members of small communities. Every man was deeply nterested in the welfare of the society to which he belonged,—a partaker n its wealth and its poverty, in its glory and its shame. In the age of Machiavelli, this was peculiarly the case. Public events had produced an mmense sum of money to private citizens. The Northern invaders had rought want to their boards, infamy to their beds, fire to their roofs, and he knife to their throats. It was natural that a man who lived in times like hese, should overrate the importance of those measures by which a nation is rendered formidable to its neighbours, and undervalue those which make it prosperous within itself.

Nothing is more remarkable, in the political treatises of Machiavelli, than the fairness of mind which they indicate. It appears where the author is in the wrong, almost as strongly as where he is in the right. He never advances a false opinion because it is new or splendid, because he can clothe it in a happy phrase, or defend it by an ingenious sophism. His errors are at once explained, by a reference to the circumstances in which he was placed. They evidently were not sought out; they lay in his way, and could scarcely be avoided. Such mistakes must necessarily be committed by early speculators in every science.

In this respect, it is amusing to compare the *Prince* and the *Discourses* with the Spirit of Laws. Montesquieu enjoys, perhaps, a wider celebrity than any political writer of modern Europe. Something he doubtless owes to his merit, but much more to his fortune. He had the good luck of a valentine. He caught the eye of the French nation, at the moment when it was waking from the long sleep of political and religious bigotry; and, in consequence, he became a favourite. The English, at that time, considered a Frenchman who talked about constitutional checks and fundamental laws as a prodigy not less astonishing than the learned pig or the musical infant. Specious but shallow, studious of effect, indifferent to truth, eager to build a system, but careless of collecting those materials out of which alone a sound and durable system can be built, he constructed theories as rapidly, and as slightly, as card-houses,—no sooner projected than completed—no sooner completed than blown away—no sooner blown away than forgotten. Machiavelli errs only because his experience, acquired in a very peculiar state of society, could not always enable him to calculate the effect of institutions differing from those of which he had observed the operation. Montesquieu errs, because he has a fine thing to say, and is resolved to say it. If the phenomena which lie before him will not suit his purpose, all history must be ransacked. If nothing established by authentic testimony can be raked or chipped to suit his Procrustean hypothesis, he puts up with some monstrous fable about Siam, or Bantam, or Japan, told by writers compared with whom Lucian and Gulliver were veracious—liars by a double right, as travellers and as Jesuits.

Propriety of thought, and propriety of diction, are commonly found together. Obscurity and affectation are the two greatest faults of style. Obscurity of expression generally springs from confusion of ideas; and the same wish to *dazzle, at any cost*, which produces affectation in the manner *of a writer, is likely to produce* sophistry in his reasonings. The judicious

and candid mind of Machiavelli shows itself in his luminous, manly, ... polished language. The style of Montesquieu, on the other hand, indic... in every page a lively and ingenious, but an unsound mind. Every t... of expression, from the mysterious conciseness of an oracle to the flipp... of a Parisian coxcomb, is employed to disguise the fallacy of some positi... and the triteness of others. Absurdities are brightened into epigrams... truisms are darkened into enigmas. It is with difficulty that the strong... eye can sustain the glare with which some parts are illuminated, or pe... trate the shade in which others are concealed.

The political works of Machiavelli derive a peculiar interest from ... mournful earnestness which he manifests whenever he touches on to... connected with the calamities of his native land. It is difficult to conce... any situation more painful than that of a great man, condemned to watch ... lingering agony of an exhausted country, to tend it during the alternate ... of stupefaction and raving which precede its dissolution, to see the sympto... of vitality disappear one by one, till nothing is left but coldness, darkn... and corruption. To this joyless and thankless duty was Machiave... called. In the energetic language of the prophet, he was "mad for the si... of his eyes which he saw"—disunion in the council, effeminacy in ... camp, liberty extinguished, commerce decaying, national honour sullie... an enlightened and flourishing people given over to the ferocity of ignor... savages. Though his opinions had not escaped the contagion of that politi... immorality which was common among his countrymen, his natural di... position seems to have been rather stern and impetuous than pliant and art... ful. When the misery and degradation of Florence, and the foul outra... which he had himself sustained, raised his mind, the smooth craft of h... profession and his nation is exchanged for the honest bitterness of scorn an... anger. He speaks like one sick of the calamitous times and abject peopl... among whom his lot is cast. He pines for the strength and glory of ancie... Rome, for the fasces of Brutus and the sword of Scipio, the gravity of th... curule chair, and the bloody pomp of the triumphal sacrifice. He seem... to be transported back to the days when eight hundred thousand Italia... warriors sprung to arms at the rumour of a Gallic invasion. He breath... all the spirit of those intrepid and haughty patricians, who forgot the deare... ties of nature in the claims of public duty, who looked with disdain on t... elephants and on the gold of Pyrrhus, and listened with unaltered compos... to the tremendous tidings of Cannæ. Like an ancient temple deformed ... the barbarous architecture of a later age, his character acquires an inter... from the very circumstances which debase it. The original proportions a... rendered more striking by the contrast which they present to the mean a... incongruous additions.

The influence of the sentiments which we have described, was not a... parent in his writings alone. His enthusiasm, barred from the care... which it would have selected for itself, seems to have found a vent in de... perate levity. He enjoyed a vindictive pleasure in outraging the opinio... of a society which he despised. He became careless of those decenci... which were expected from a man so highly distinguished in the litera... and political world. The sarcastic bitterness of his conversation disgust... those who were more inclined to accuse his licentiousness than their ow... degeneracy, and who were unable to conceive the strength of those emotio... *which are concealed* by the jests of the wretched, and by the follies ... *the wise.*

The historical works of Machiavelli still remain to be considered. The of Castruccio Castracani will occupy us for a very short time, and would cely have demanded our notice, had it not attracted a much greater e of public attention than it deserves. Few books, indeed, could be interesting than a careful and judicious account, from such a pen, of illustrious Prince of Lucca, the most eminent of those Italian chiefs, , like Pisistratus and Gelon, acquired a power felt rather than seen, resting, not on law or on prescription, but on the public favour and on r great personal qualities. Such a work would exhibit to us the real re of that species of sovereignty, so singular, and so often misunder- d, which the Greeks denominated *tyranny*, and which, modified in some ee by the feudal system, re-appeared in the commonwealths of Lom- dy and Tuscany. But this little composition of Machiavelli is in no e a history. It has no pretensions to fidelity. It is a trifle, and not ry successful trifle. It is scarcely more authentic than the novel of phegor, and is very much duller.

The last great work of this illustrious man was the History of his native . It was written by the command of the Pope, who, as chief of the se of Medici, was at that time sovereign of Florence. The characters of mo, of Piero, and of Lorenzo, are, however, treated with a freedom impartiality equally honourable to the writer and to the patron. The eries and humiliations of dependence, the bread which is more bitter every other food, the stairs which are more painful than every other ent,* had not broken the spirit of Machiavelli. The most corrupting t in a corrupting profession, had not depraved the generous heart of ement.

The History does not appear to be the fruit of much industry or research. is unquestionably inaccurate. But it is elegant, lively, and picturesque, yond any other in the Italian language. The reader, we believe, carries ay from it a more vivid and a more faithful impression of the national aracter and manners than from more correct accounts. The truth is, the book belongs rather to ancient than to modern literature. It is the style, not of Davila and Clarendon, but of Herodotus and Tacitus: the classical histories may almost be called romances founded in fact. The relation is, no doubt, in all its principal points, strictly true. But the numerous little incidents which heighten the interest, the words, the gestures, the looks, are evidently furnished by the imagination of the author. The fashion of later times is different. A more exact narrative is given by the writer. It may be doubted whether more exact notions are conveyed to the reader. The best portraits are those in which there is a slight mixture of caricature; and we are not aware, that the best histories are not those in which a little of the exaggeration of fictitious narrative is judiciously em- ployed. Something is lost in accuracy; but much is gained in effect. The finer lines are neglected; but the great characteristic features are im- printed on the mind for ever.

The History terminates with the death of Lorenzo de' Medici. Ma- chiavelli had, it seems, intended to continue it to a later period. But his death prevented the execution of his design; and the melancholy task of recording the desolation and shame of Italy devolved on Guicciardini.

Machiavelli lived long enough to see the commencement of the last

* *Dante*. Paradiso, Canto xvii.

struggle for Florentine liberty. Soon after his death, monarchy was finally established,—not such a monarchy as that of which Cosmo had laid the foundations deep in the constitution and feelings of his countrymen, and which Lorenzo had embellished with the trophies of every science and every art; but a loathsome tyranny, proud and mean, cruel and feeble, bigotted and lascivious. The character of Machiavelli was hateful to the new masters of Italy; and those parts of his theory which were in strict accordance with their own daily practice, afforded a pretext for blackening his memory. His works were misrepresented by the learned, misconstrued by the ignorant, censured by the church, abused with all the rancour of simulated virtue, by the minions of a base despotism, and the priests of a baser superstition. The name of the man whose genius had illuminated all the dark places of policy, and to whose patriotic wisdom an oppressed people had owed their last chance of emancipation and revenge, passed into a proverb of infamy. For more than two hundred years his bones lay undistinguished. At length, an English nobleman paid the last honours to the greatest statesman of Florence. In the church of Santa Croce, a monument was erected to his memory, which is contemplated with reverence by all who can distinguish the virtues of a great mind through the corruptions of a degenerate age;—and which will be approached with still deeper homage when the object to which his public life was devoted shall be attained,—when the foreign yoke shall be broken, when a second Proccita shall avenge the wrongs of Naples, when a happier Rienzi shall restore the good estate of Rome, when the streets of Florence and Bologna shall again resound with their ancient war-cry—*Popolo; popolo; muoiano i tiranni!**

JEFFERSON.†

Jefferson's understanding and character were of a plain, bold, and practical cast—full of activity and strength. But neither in his politics, science or literature, do we see any sign of genius or depth. His speculations are chiefly interesting from our curiosity to learn the opinions of so celebrated a person. There is scarce a tincture visible from first to last, among all his multifarious disquisitions, of real philosophical sagacity, inventive observation, or refinement of taste. Independent and incorruptible himself, he was proud of the virtue of the party with which he acted, and confident in his belief that the popular will, whilst unvitiated by the perverse laws and corrupt habits of communities where commerce and distinction of orders had prevailed, might be trusted as the sole principle of government. This personal uprightness, and this confiding reliance in the trustworthiness of human nature, under such circumstances, at least, as the population of the United States is placed in, are in singular contrast with the boundless suspicions he is always brooding over in the case of his federal opponents, and

* The character of Machiavelli is beautifully and graphically delineated in the Review of the first part of Dugald Stewart's Introduction to the Encyclopædia Britannica. The article displays great and various erudition, contains several masterly sketches of our most distinguished philosophers, and is written with power, dignity, and elegance. It was contributed by Sir James Mackintosh. See Vol. xxvii. page 209.

† Jefferson's Memoirs and Correspondence. Now first published from the Original Manuscripts, edited by Thomas Jefferson Randolph. 4 Vols. 8vo. London, 1829.—Vol. li. page 496 July, 1830.

ie sweeping denunciations which he promulgates against the privileged lasses of Europe.

We have seen that he was constantly pining after what he felt to be his ue vocation. The interest which attends the literary pursuits and opi-ions of men eminent in the practical part of life, has led us to look atten-ively for the traces of them scattered up and down these volumes. They how him to have been so plainly destined for an enterprising scholar, rather han a master, that we cannot count him as one of the sacrifices which, in ree countries, the sciences are always offering up at the altar of patriotism r ambition. The *Notes on Virginia* (his only professed work) were ori-ginally written as answers to some questions put to him by a foreigner. A French translation of some private copies having appeared, their publication in 1787 became scarcely a matter of choice. They contain a great deal of useful knowledge, told very agreeably. But the most striking thing about them, is the evidence which they give of some secret force of cha-racter behind, by producing an effect out of all proportion either with the real importance of the subject, or any apparent superiority in the author. There is a weightiness, certainly, always in good sense, when it is at once earnest and unpretending. But sincerity and moral courage are imposing auxiliaries; and these great characteristics of his mind were not more strongly exhibited in after-life, than in the directness with which he here tells the Virginians what he thinks the truth, on such irritable questions as slavery and their own defective constitution, however unpalatable the truths might be.

Jefferson, as the friend of La Fayette, and the representative of a country whose revolutionary precedent was regarded as so perfect a model, that its authority was "treated like that of the Bible, open to explanation, but not to question," had extraordinary opportunities, whilst at Paris, of ascer-taining the course which the French Revolution was about to take. His opinions, however, rose and fell with the events of the day; and though he made all proper allowances for "three ages without national morality," and thought that the generation of Frenchmen who began that bold experiment were not sufficiently virtuous and enlightened themselves to reap the fruits of it, yet he left France, satisfied that all would end happily in a year. His criticisms in philosophy frequently evince as little foresight and compre-hensiveness as his most sanguine political anticipations. He informs us of an Abbé at Paris, in 1788, who had shaken, if not destroyed, the received theory for explaining the phenomenon of the rainbow. He considers the merit of Herschel to be confined to that of being a good optician only. He had not the prejudice of Buffon to speak of chemistry as a kind of cookery, and to put the laboratory on a footing with the kitchen; but he censures Lavoisière's attempt at introducing a systematic nomenclature, as probably an age too soon, and as calculated to retard the progress of science by a jargon, in which the reformation of this year must be again reformed the next. Not being fond of merely abstract reading, it is not singular that he should, apparently, have had no fixed opinions on the metaphysics of mo-rals: since they are important only as a matter of abstract reasoning; for nature, fortunately, has taken care that a difference in our premises here makes no difference in our conclusion. In one place it is said, that "mo-rals are too essential to the happiness of man, to be risked on the uncertain combinations of the head. She laid their foundation, therefore, in sen-timent, not in science. For one man of science, there are thousands who

are not. What would have become of them? The moral sense is as much a part of a man as his leg or arm. State a moral case to a ploughman and a professor," etc. Afterwards, thanking Dr. Price for a copy of his book, he agrees, " we may well admit morality to be the child of the understanding, rather than of the senses, when we observe that it becomes dear to us as the latter weaken, and as the former grows stronger by time and experience, till the hour arrives in which all other objects lose their value." At a later period, he returns to the belief, that a moral sense is as much a part of our constitution as the sense of seeing. Our English moralists will be more surprised at the standard work on this subject which, when writing to his ward, he puts at the head of the good books that are to encourage and direct his feelings: " The writings of Sterne, particularly, form the best course of morality that ever was written."

Jefferson was American to the back-bone. A boiling temperament would make him naturally " a good hater;" but a love of his country, and what he supposed to be her interests, steadily guided him in choosing the objects of his antipathy. His general thirst for knowledge was under the influence of the same passion, and mainly directed to those sources which were likely to satisfy not only his curiosity, but his patriotic feelings. His investigations into Climate conclude with a preference of that of America (principally on account of its greater clearness) over that of the parts of Europe with which he was acquainted. His reasonable denial of the theory, by which Raynal supposes that Europeans migrating to America must degenerate, leads him to question also the fact, as copied by De Paw and Robertson from Ulloa, of the inferiority of the native Indians; and to doubt as an unwarrantable assumption, the excess of moisture, to which Buffon had attributed this result. Jefferson had collected, at one time, fifty vocabularies of the aboriginal tribes within his reach, extending to about two hundred and fifty words. Of these about seventy-three words were common to the Asiatic lists of one hundred and thirty words, as formed by Pallas. A comparison of languages seems the only chance of furnishing something like a key among the hundred theories concerning the origin of the Indian tribes. But there was also a stimulating encouragement in the suspicion Jefferson entertained, that farther investigation would show a greater number of radical languages among the nations of America, than among those of the other hemisphere. It will be poor consideration to the melancholy remnants, gradually driven towards the western side of the Missisippi, to learn that they come, if of a poor family, yet of an ancient house. On another question, the right of the Anglo-Americans to invent new words toward recruiting the English language, we readily admit their title to be quite equal to our own. As yet, however, no proof of their " process of sound eulogisation" has reached us, by which we can recognise that any progress has " been made towards furnishing, after the Ionians, a second example of a colonial dialect improving on its primitive." The following burst of philological admiration represents so little our own opinion of the two languages which it compares, that we must look elsewhere for a judge on the successfulness of any such experiment. " What a language has the French become since the date of their Revolution, by the free introduction of new words! The most copious and eloquent in the living world, and equal to the Greek, had not that been regularly modifiable almost *ad infinitum*." In case the malignant saying, that their Adam and Eve came out of Newgate, should be assumed by any body as a fact explanatory of any supposed peculiarity

in their national character or speech, the proportion of the people to whom this disreputable pedigree can apply, is mentioned as far too small to have left any trace. Two thousand are stated to be the whole number of malefactors sent out; and four thousand to be more than they and their descendants at the declaration of independence.

Nobody was ever more aware than Jefferson of the difficulty of maintaining a republican form of government under any circumstances, and of the impossibility of doing so, except under the most favourable. The singular disposition of men to quarrel and divide into parties, after the experience of America, in "the Committee of States," and the example of the Directory of France, he considered to be an element in human nature, fatal to the existence of any executive consisting of a plurality. It was on the first of these occasions, that Franklin, illustrating his opinions, as usual, under an apologue, told him the story of the two men, left in charge of Eddystone Lighthouse for the winter, who were found not on speaking terms with each other in the spring. A community of Tories would still find cause of contention; but the seeds of schism exist still more positively in the fact, that "the parties of Whig and Tory are those of nature. They exist in all countries, whether called by these names or by those of Aristocrats and Democrats,—*Côté droit* and *Côté gauche*,—Ultras and Radicals,—Serviles and Liberals. The sickly, weakly, timid man fears the people, and is a Tory by nature. The healthy, strong, and bold, cherishes them, and is a Whig by nature." The distinction thus stated, imposes upon the most ardent enthusiasts for freedom, the necessity of enquiring in each case what is the character of the people, and how far it can be trusted with the reins. Much will depend, in the first instance, on our general view of human nature, and on the probability of its approaching any greater degree of perfection than it has hitherto attained. Jefferson, speaking of Washington, says, "He has often declared to me, that he considered our new constitution as an experiment on the practicability of republican government, and with what dose of liberty man could be trusted for his own good; that he was determined the experiment should have a fair trial; and he would lose the last drop of his blood in support of it. I do not believe that he had not a firm confidence in the durability of our government. He was naturally distrustful of men, and inclined to gloomy apprehensions; and I was ever persuaded, that a belief that we must at length end in something like a British Constitution, had some weight in his adoption of the ceremonies of levees, etc., calculated to prepare us for a change which he believed possible; and to let it come on with as little shock as might be to the public mind." According to Jefferson, Washington had less confidence in the capability of man for political self-government than Jefferson had himself—Adams less than Washington—and Hamilton less than Adams. These were the shades of difference, which the fury of party deepened, from time to time, into the darkest contrasts under the most odious suspicions. Jefferson's own confidence, indeed, is in man only as he is found in America, and there only for a season. Agricultural habits and education are laid down as the two indispensable conditions. In his own, as in other countries, the question is, not what we wish, but what is practicable. Of South America, its independence being achieved, he puts, as the next question, "and a very serious one, What will then become of them? Ignorance and bigotry, like other insanities, are incapable of self-government. I do believe it would be better

for them to obtain freedom by degrees only." He afterwards prescribes certain things as a good beginning, particularly Trial by Jury,—"as the school in which their people might begin to learn the exercise of civil duties as well as rights." Mr. Bentham will probably smile to find him praising Jury Trial as the firmest bulwark of English liberty. "Were I called upon to decide whether the people had best be omitted in the legislative or judiciary department, I would say, it is better to leave them out of the legislative. The execution of the laws is more important than the making them." In a letter to Paine, 1789, he expresses his apprehension that a majority of the States-General cannot be induced to adopt this form of trial,—"the only anchor ever yet imagined by man, by which a government can be held to the principles of its constitution." At this period he considered the French to be unprepared even for the protection of the Habeas Corpus act; and gave a curious specimen of his good faith by excepting the nobles out of a clause for the security of personal liberty, inserted by him in a charter of rights, which he then sketched out for the consideration of the patriots. Long afterwards he quotes to Madame de Staël the constitution of 1789, as sufficient for liberty and prosperity, "if wisdom could but have stayed at that point the fervid but imprudent zeal of men who did not know the character of their own countrymen." Reminding La Fayette of their discussions at that day, he admits that the people proved equal to the constitution of 1791; and fixes as the fatal error of the republicans (closet politicians merely, unpractised in the knowledge of men) their separation from the constitutionalists, under the idea that more could be obtained and borne. "They did not weigh the hazards of a transition from one form of government to another; the value of what they had already rescued from those hazards, and might hold in security if they pleased; nor the imprudence of giving up the certainty of such a degree of liberty, under a limited monarchy, for the uncertainty of a little more under the form of a republic. Whether the state of society in Europe can bear a republican government, I doubted, you know, when with you, and I do now." It is some comfort that we are advancing quicker than he once expected. In 1786, he found in France oppression of body and mind, in every form, so firmly settled in the mass of the people, that their redemption from them could never be hoped. "If all the sovereigns of Europe were to set themselves to work to emancipate the minds of their subjects from their present ignorance and prejudices, and that as zealously as they now endeavour the contrary, a thousand years would not place them on that high ground on which our common people are now setting out. The people of England, I think, are less oppressed than here. But it needs but half an eye to see, when among them, that the foundation is laid in their dispositions for the establishment of a despotism." In 1823, agreeing with Adams on the difficulties of a revolution from despotism to freedom, and that the generation which commences one is rarely competent to complete it, he acknowledges that the Press prevents our condition from being desperate. "A light has dawned on the middling classes only of the men in Europe; the kings and the rabble, of equal ignorance, have not yet received its rays." Cicero's Letters, it appears, suggested to him a very different image from the poetical one of Brutus, rising effulgent from the godlike stroke, and bidding the father of his country hail. "Steeped in corruption as the whole nation was, what could even Cicero, Cato, Brutus, have done, had it been referred to them to establish a good government for their country? They

had no ideas of government themselves, but of their degenerate Senate; nor the people of liberty, but of the factious opposition of their Tribunes. I confess I can neither see how this enigma can be solved, nor how farther shown why it has been the fate of that delightful country never to have known to this day, and through a course of five-and-twenty hundred years, the history of which we possess, one single day of free and rational government." The treatises on government left us by antiquity, are not of a kind to have made much impression on the mind of Jefferson; not even Cicero's *De Republicâ*, had it travelled to Monticello. He would find there no provision for what he considers the two great objects of a constitution,—first, that of preventing the ascendancy of an artificial aristocracy, grounded on wealth and birth; next, that of securing in its public offices, for the instruction, the trusts, and government of society, a pure selection from among nature's most precious gifts, the natural aristocracy of talent and of virtue. It will be much easier to protect a community from being loaded with misery by kings, priests, and nobles,—"which descriptions of men are an abandoned confederacy against the happiness of the people,"—than to prescribe a successful arrangement for the latter equally important purpose. Jefferson declares that the scurrility of their Press is alone sufficient to drive the best men, whose sensibilities are stronger than their confidence in public justice, from aspiring to exalted stations. "I may say, from intimate knowledge, that we should have lost the services of the greatest character of our country, had he been assailed with the degree of licentiousness now practised. The torture he felt under rare and slight attacks, proved that, under those of which the federal bands have shown themselves capable, he would have thrown up the helm in a burst of indignation." The *Republic* of Plato was to Jefferson the heaviest task-work of any reading he ever undertook. He concluded it by congratulating mankind, that "Platonic republicanism had not obtained the same favour as Platonic Christianity:" since it could have had no other consequence than that we should be now all living, men, women and children, pell-mell together, like beasts in the forest.

An exaggerated passion for independence, seems at times to pervert the correctness of Jefferson's judgment on points connected with our physical and moral constitution, as well as with the principles of society. Not satisfied with telling his young pupil, that a gun, and not a book, ought to be the constant companion of his walks, he proceeds to question the good sense of the Europeans, in valuing themselves upon having subdued the horse to the uses of man "I doubt whether we have not lost more than we have gained by the use of this animal. No one has occasioned so much the degeneracy of the human body. An Indian goes on foot nearly as far in a day for a long journey, as an enfeebled white does on his horse, and he will tire the best horses." Our substitution of positive institutions for individual intelligence and force, collected in a gipsy state, seems to have produced an equally pernicious effect on our characters. "I am convinced that those societies (as the Indians) which live without government, enjoy in their general mass an infinitely greater degree of happiness than those who live under the European governments. Among the former, public opinion is in the place of law, and restrains as powerfully as laws ever did anywhere. Among the latter, under the pretence of governing, they have divided their nation into classes, wolves and sheep." In another place, describing to Madison in strong terms the curse of existence under every government except that of America, and, in some slight degree, except under that of England,

he goes so far as to declare, that it is a problem not clear in his mind that the condition of the Indians, without any government, is not yet the best of all. This sort of language much more resembles the fanaticism of some fulminator of paradoxes like Rousseau, than the gravity of a statesman, to whose discretion the interests of a civilized community might be safely left.

The commentary on Montesquieu by Destutt Tracy, "unquestionably the ablest living writer on abstract subjects," appears to be his favourite work on the principles of government. It is called "the most precious gift the present age has received." Taylor's Enquiry, in opposition to Adams's Defence, represents the theory of the constitution of America, as understood by the dominant party at the present day; whilst Hume's History, as republicanized by Baxter, is referred to for the free principles of the English constitution. This latter work seems to have been printed in England, where it is said "not to be popular, because it is republican." Popularity or unpopularity can hardly be predicated of a work, of whose existence the most omnigenous readers among our acquaintance have never heard. Brought up in the neighbourhood of indigenous Indians, and living at head-quarters during two revolutions, Jefferson had splendid opportunities for the examination and discussion of first principles. After complaining that there is no good work on the organization of society into civil government, he quotes the well-known condition of the Tribes, and especially the present example of the Cherokees, as conclusive against the patriarchal hypothesis. His expectations in 1789, were apparently turned not merely to the establishment of a national government in France, but to the discovery of new truths in politics. These truths were to be such as would rouse Americans even "from the errors in which they had been hitherto rocked;" but were scarce likely to benefit an Englishman, as they are pronounced to be reasonable beyond his reach, "who, slumbering under a kind of half reformation in politics and in religion, is not excited by any thing he feels or sees to question the remains of prejudice!" We cannot compliment him on what appears to be the only discovery, in the class of new truths, he has thought worth preserving. It is a proof, which, in his horror of the corrupting consequences of a national debt, he volunteers against any possible right in one generation of men to bind another. This doctrine was so great a favourite with its author, that he sent it to Madison all the way from Paris, and at the lapse of a quarter of a century is seen urging it with undiminished earnestness, on the head of the Committee of Finance. Though, like some other natural rights, it has not yet entered into any declaration of them, it is said to be no less a law. Had we a shilling in the American funds, we should feel not over and above easy, when the honest and vigorous understanding of the ex-President could be duped by such strange sophistry; especially, since his school is zealous in preaching the necessity of declarations of natural rights, strenuous for re-setting the law of nations upon true principles, and resolved to establish their theories by force the year they are strong enough to do so.

It has been our object, by a reference to opinions upon general subjects, with which most readers might be supposed to take more or less interest, to give some idea of Jefferson himself. We perceive that we have said nothing of his views on religion, and his sanguine "trust that there is not a *young man* now living in the United States, who will not die a Unitarian." Our extracts, too, will give a very feeble notion of the fierceness of his thoughts and language concerning a hundred things, as well as per-

sons, on which his blood seems to have never cooled. The rage which breaks out on occasion of the honorary institution of the Cincinnati, and the arbitrary distinctions of Europe, is often like insanity. The Throne of Heaven should be besieged with eternal prayers "to extirpate from creation that class of human lions, tigers, and mammoths, called Kings;" among whom, "there is not a crowned head in Europe, whose talents or merits would entitle him to be elected a vestry-man, by the people of any parish in America." George the Third is "maniac George." Louis the Sixteenth "goes for nothing. He hunts one-half the day, is drunk the other, and signs whatever he is bid." It ought to be acknowledged, that in the case of Louis the Sixteenth, as in that of Washington, it requires more ingenuity than we are master of, to reconcile the contradictions which wait upon the writer's spleen. Within a twelvemonth, the King of France "is the honestest man in his kingdom, the most regular and economical." A clergy is said to live like printers, by the zeal they can kindle and the schisms they can create. The mild and simple principles of the Christian philosophy would produce too much calm, too much regularity of good, to extract from its disciples a support for a numerous priesthood, were they not to sophisticate it, ramify it, split it into hairs, and twist its texts, till they cover the divine morality of its author with mysteries, and require a priesthood to explain them. The Quakers seem to have discovered this. They have no priests, therefore no schisms."

It is as an American citizen that Jefferson earned and deserves his fame. We have not space to enter, except very briefly, on the honourable detail of his public life. As a Virginian legislator, himself a slave-owner, he there set the example of an effort (unfortunately for his countrymen, an unsuccessful one) for permission to emancipate their slaves. Again, himself a lawyer, aided only by his two friends Wythe and Pendleton, he completed, and reported to the General Assembly, in eighteen months, the extensive improvements both in the principle and the form of their laws, which their new circumstances required. The extravagant compliments with which our own little attempts at consolidation of some chapters in criminal law have been overlaid, and the fatted calf which Sir Robert Peel kills thereupon regularly every session to his own glory, are things which must make our legislative wisdom reasonably suspected among the Americans. They know what they have themselves done in the self-same matter, and can therefore estimate our vaunting and our astonishment at its true value. In a few months, and in this single work, the three colleagues "brought so much of the common law as it was thought necessary to alter—all the British statutes from *Magna Charta* to the present day, and all the laws of Virginia, from the establishment of their legislature in 4 Jas. I. to the present time, which they thought should be retained—within the compass of one hundred and twenty-six bills, making a printed folio of ninety pages only." Nearly a volume and a half of the present Correspondence, and a considerable portion of his Memoir, relate to the remarkable period from 1785 to 1790, which Jefferson passed as the American minister at Paris. His watchfulness over every subject which might bear on the most favourable arrangement of their new commercial treaties; his perseverance in seeking to negotiate a general alliance against Algiers; the skill and knowledge with which he argued the different questions of national interest that arose during his residence, will not suffer even in comparison with Franklin's diplomatic talents. Every thing he sees seems to suggest to him the question, Whether it can

be made useful in America? Could we compare a twelvemonth's letters from our Ambassadors' bags at Paris, Florence, or elsewhere, we should see whether our enormous diplomatic salaries are any thing else than very successful measures for securing our business being ill and idly done. Jefferson's history, after he returned home, whether as Foreign Secretary to Washington,—as Vice-President under Adams,—or as President, putting the vessel of the state on her Republican tack, is, in other words, the history of America during the several periods.

"All that should accompany old age" afterwards followed him in his retirement to Monticello, and dignified his slow-declining years. The din and dangers of American politics must, from time to time, have occasionally disturbed a mind, although less anxious, less patriotic, and less personally pledged, than that of Jefferson. But the great question of Public Education was the only one on which he reserved to himself, as it were the right, as long as he breathed, practically to engage and lead. As early as 1779 he had proposed a systematical plan of general education for Virginia, and accordingly had prepared three bills, with three distinct grades of instruction. The first consisted of elementary schools, and comprehended all children, rich and poor. The second, colleges for a middle degree of learning, calculated for such purposes of common life as would be desirable to all persons in easy circumstances. The last was a finishing university, for teaching the highest degree of knowledge that a place of mere education can profess to teach. Of these, the elementary bill had alone passed, and that not until 1796. As the expense of the schools was to be borne by a general rate in every county, it appears that the bill had been enforced in none. Jefferson says, in 1822, that if a single boy had received the elements of common education in them, it was in some part of the country not known to him. In respect of a higher scale of education, he complains to Adams that the "post-revolutionary youth were born under happier stars" than they had been; acquiring all learning in their mother's womb, and treating all knowledge which was not innate, with contempt, or at least neglect. The University of Virginia, mainly established by the energy of this indefatigable octogenarian, will, we trust, save them from "the degradation of becoming the Barbary of the Union, and of falling into the ranks of their own negroes." The account of its early difficulties is strikingly like those of the London University; only the insubordination to which Jefferson looked with dismay, as to breakers ahead, was the insubordination of students, not professors. Premature ideas of independence, too little repressed by parents, are stated to be the great obstacle of science, and the principal cause of its decay, since the revolution. It is gratifying to see, by a letter written only six months before his death, that, delighted with the professors procured from England, and with the intelligence and industry of the youths assembled for instruction, the spirited old patriot descended into his grave with anticipations of a glorious future, which he could not live to see. "The majority of the rulers of our state educated here, will exhibit their country in a degree of sound respectability it has never known, either in our day or those of our forefathers." Jefferson, for fifty years, continued uniformly to insist that general instruction was indispensable to the maintenance of the government as a republic. He died in the farther faith, that education at home, that is, that the education of the southern youth in the southern States *is equally* necessary, if the States are to remain sovereign and independent. The crack, down to its very centre, which the line of geographi

division has run across the Union, may be imagined from the alarm with which he describes the fact, that five hundred of their sons were educating in the northern seminaries, as "a canker eating on the vitals of their existence." Washington, in his will, recommends the endowment of a university in Virginia, as a protection against the necessity of passing so important a period of life in Europe. Little could he foresee that the fortune of his country would imperatively demand a domestic institution, on the ground of a greater hostility in principle and position, in Connecticut and New York. "The reflections that the boys of this age are to be the men of the next: that they should be prepared to receive the holy charge which we are cherishing to deliver over to them; that in establishing an institution of wisdom for them, we secure it to all our future generations; that, in fulfilling this duty, we bring home to our own bosoms the sweet consolation of seeing our sons rising under a luminous tuition to destinies of high promise; these are considerations which will occur to all; but all, I fear, do not see the speck in our horizon which is to burst on us, as a tornado, sooner or later."

Our course of miscellaneous observations may have served to bring before the reader more distinctly the individual character and merits of this distinguished statesman. But space is not remaining for a single sentence on what we stated at the beginning to be the most important part of the present volumes. The historian and politician will here find invaluable materials upon nearly all the controverted points of the domestic and foreign policy of the United States, from the day of their existence as an independent government. The conclusion of our private judgment considerably inclines against some of the propositions maintained by Jefferson: yet, as a party equally honest and well-informed, he will be a necessary witness, whenever we survey the successive constitutional questions which have so furiously divided parties in America. Between the opposite hazards pressing in on either side, the nation has made its choice—a choice certainly of spirit, perhaps of wisdom. For, in case the alternative dependent on a farther consolidation of the powers of the general government be at all correctly assumed throughout this correspondence, it is impossible to say, under any circumstances of intermediate dissension and ultimate separation, that the painful alternative, thus taken and endured, was not yet the best. The foreign policy of the United States is to us a point of more immediate, as, indeed, it some day must become a point of incalculable, importance. It involves bold innovations on the principles and practice of the Law of Nations, as hitherto understood and established. Some of these innovations appear to be improvements for the interest of humanity; others, to be only encroachments and pretexts for the interest of America. In the meantime, it is evident that, as against Europe, and especially as against England, there exists no difference of opinion in their determination to dictate the novelties of their diplomacy at the cannon's mouth. Jefferson was mistaken in his date; but his declaration is the motto of federalists and republicans alike, and is applied to all matters relating to the continent and the islands of America, as much as to the universal sea. "The day is within my time as well as yours, when we may say by what laws other nations shall treat us on the sea; and we will say it." The authority of mere precedent on one side, and this intractableness of insolent passion on the other, can never meet. What a debt would the world owe to those statesmen in both

countries, who, whilst her calm and deliberate voice might be yet listened to, would close these fatal questions on the just principles of Reason!

PARALLEL BETWEEN CROMWELL AND NAPOLEON.*

Between Cromwell and Napoleon, Mr. Hallam has instituted a parallel, scarcely less ingenious than that which Burke has drawn between Richard Cœur de Lion and Charles the Twelfth of Sweden. In this parallel, however, and indeed throughout his work, we think that he hardly gives Cromwell fair measure. "Cromwell," says he, "far unlike his antitype, never showed any signs of a legislative mind, or any desire to place his renown on that noblest basis, the amelioration of social institutions." The difference in this respect, we conceive, was not in the characters of the men, but in the characters of the revolutions by means of which they rose to power. The civil war in England had been undertaken to defend and restore; the republicans of France set themselves to destroy. In England, the principles of the common law had never been disturbed; and most even of its forms had been held sacred. In France, the law and its ministers had been swept away together. In France, therefore, legislation necessarily became the first business of the first settled government which rose on the ruins of the old system. The admirers of Inigo Jones have always maintained that his works are inferior to those of Sir Christopher Wren, only because the great fire of London gave to the latter such a field for the display of his powers, as no architect in the history of the world ever possessed. Similar allowance must be made for Cromwell. If he erected little that was new, it was because there had been no general devastation to clear a space for him. As it was, he reformed the representative system in a most judicious manner. He rendered the administration of justice uniform throughout the island. We will quote a passage from his speech to the Parliament in September, 1656, which contains, we think, stronger indications of a legislative mind, than are to be found in the whole range of orations delivered on such occasions before or since.

"There is one general grievance in the nation. It is the law . . . . I think, I may say it, I have as eminent judges in this land as have been had, or that the nation has had for these many years. Truly, I could be particular as to the executive part, to the administration; but that would trouble you. But the truth of it is, there are wicked and abominable laws that will be in your power to alter. To hang a man for sixpence, threepence, I know not what,—to hang for a trifle, and pardon murder, is in the ministration of the law, through the ill framing of it. I have known in my experience abominable murders quitted; and to see men lose their lives for petty matters! This is a thing that God will reckon for; and I wish it may not lie upon this nation a day longer than you have an opportunity to give a remedy; and I hope I shall cheerfully join with you in it."

Mr. Hallam truly says, that though it is impossible to rank Cromwell with Napoleon as a general, yet "his exploits were as much above the level of

* Hallam's Constitutional History.—Vol. xlviii. page 142. September, 1828.

his contemporaries, and more the effects of an original uneducated capacity." Bonaparte was trained in the best military schools; the army which he led to Italy was one of the finest that ever existed. Cromwell passed his youth and the prime of his manhood in a civil situation. He never looked on war till he was more than forty years old. He had first to form himself, and then to form his troops. Out of raw levies he created an army, the bravest and the best disciplined, the most orderly in peace, and the most terrible in war, that Europe had seen. He called this body into existence. He led it to conquest. He never fought a battle without gaining a victory. He never gained a victory without annihilating the force opposed to him. Yet his triumphs were not the highest glory of his military system. The respect which his troops paid to property, their attachment to the laws and religion of their country, their intelligence, their submission to the civil power, their temperance, their industry, are without parallel. It was after the Restoration that the spirit which their great leader had infused into them was most signally displayed. At the command of the established government, a government which had no means of enforcing obedience, fifty thousand soldiers, whose backs no enemy had ever seen, either in domestic or in continental war, laid down their arms, and retired into the mass of the people—thenceforward to be distinguished only by superior diligence, sobriety, and regularity in the pursuits of peace, from the other members of the community which they had saved.

In the general spirit and character of his administration, we think Cromwell far superior to Napoleon. "In civil government," says Mr. Hallam, there can be no adequate parallel between one who had sucked only the dregs of a besotted fanaticism, and one to whom the stores of reason and philosophy were open." These expressions, it seems to us, convey the highest eulogium on our great countryman. Reason and philosophy did not teach the conqueror of Europe to command his passions, or to pursue, as a first object, the happiness of his people. They did not prevent him from risking his fame and his power in a frantic contest against the principles of human nature and the laws of the physical world, against the rage of the winter and the liberty of the sea. They did not exempt him from the influence of that most pernicious of superstitions, a presumptuous fatalism. They did not preserve him from the inebriation of prosperity, or restrain him from indecent querulousness and violence in adversity. On the other hand, the fanaticism of Cromwell never urged him on impracticable undertakings, or confused his perception of the public good. Inferior to Bonaparte in invention, he was far superior to him in wisdom. The French Emperor is among conquerors what Voltaire is among writers, a miraculous child. His splendid genius was frequently clouded by fits of humour as absurdly perverse as those of the pet of the nursery, who quarrels with his food, and dashes his playthings to pieces. Cromwell was emphatically a man. He possessed, in an eminent degree, that masculine and full-grown robustness of mind, that equally diffused intellectual health, which, if our national partiality does not mislead us, has peculiarly characterised the great men of England. Never was any ruler so conspicuously born for sovereignty. The cup which has intoxicated almost all others, sobered him. His spirit, restless from its buoyancy in a lower sphere, reposed in majestic placidity as soon as it had reached the level congenial to it. He had nothing in common with that large class of men who distinguish themselves in lower posts, and whose incapacity becomes obvious as soon as the public voice

summons them to take the lead. Rapidly as his fortunes grew, his mind expanded more rapidly still. Insignificant as a private citizen, he was a great general; he was a still greater prince. The manner of Napoleon was a theatrical compound, in which the coarseness of a revolutionary guard-room was blended with the ceremony of the old Court of Versailles. Cromwell, by the confession even of his enemies, exhibited in his demeanour the simple and natural nobleness of a man, neither ashamed of his origin, nor vain of his elevation; of a man who had found his proper place in society, and who felt secure that he was competent to fill it. Easy, even to familiarity, where his own dignity was concerned; he was punctilious only for his country. His own character he left to take care of itself; he left it to be defended by his victories in war, and his reforms in peace. But he was a jealous and implacable guardian of the public honour. He suffered a crazy Quaker to insult him in the midst of Whitehall, and revenged himself only by liberating him and giving him a dinner. But he was prepared to risk the chances of war to avenge the blood of a private Englishman.

No sovereign ever carried to the throne so large a portion of the best qualities of the middling orders—so strong a sympathy with the feelings and interests of his people. He was sometimes driven to arbitrary measures; but he had a high, stout, honest, English heart. Hence it was that he loved to surround his throne with such men as Hale and Blake. Hence it was that he allowed so large a share of political liberty to his subjects, and that even when an opposition dangerous to his power, and to his person, almost compelled him to govern by the sword, he was still anxious to leave a germ from which, at a more favourable season, free institutions might spring. We firmly believe, that if his first Parliament had not commenced its debates by disputing his title, his government would have been as mild at home as it was energetic and able abroad. He was a soldier;—he had risen by war. Had his ambition been of an impure or selfish kind, it would have been easy for him to plunge his country into continental hostilities on a large scale, and to dazzle the restless factions which he ruled, by the splendour of his victories. Some of his enemies have sneeringly remarked, that in the successes obtained under his administration, he had no personal share; as if a man who had raised himself from obscurity to empire solely by his military talents, could have any unworthy reason for shrinking from military enterprise. This reproach is his highest glory. In the success of the English navy he could have no selfish interest. Its triumphs added nothing to his fame; its increase added nothing to his means of overawing his enemies; its great leader was not his friend. Yet he took a peculiar pleasure in encouraging that noble service, which, of all the instruments employed by an English government, is the most impotent for mischief, and the most powerful for good. His administration was glorious, but with no vulgar glory. It was not one of those periods of overstrained and convulsive exertion which necessarily produce debility and languor. Its energy was natural, healthful, temperate. He placed England at the head of the Protestant interest, and in the first rank of Christian powers. He taught every nation to value her friendship and to dread her enmity. But he did not squander her resources in a vain attempt to invest her with that supremacy which no power, in the modern system

Europe, can safely affect, or can long retain.

His noble and sober wisdom had its reward. If he did not carry the

banners of the Commonwealth in triumph to distant capitals; if he did not adorn Whitehall with the spoils of the Stadthouse and the Louvre; if he did not portion out Flanders and Germany into principalities for his kinsmen and his generals; he did not, on the other hand, see his country overrun by the armies of nations which his ambition had provoked. He did not drag out the last years of his life an exile and a prisoner, in an unhealthy climate and under an ungenerous gaoler; raging with the impotent desire of vengeance, and brooding over visions of departed glory. He went down to his grave in the fulness of power and fame; and left to his son an authority which any man of ordinary firmness and prudence would have retained.

But for the weakness of that foolish Ishbosheth, the opinions which we have been expressing would, we believe, now have formed the orthodox creed of good Englishmen. We might now be writing under the government of his Highness Oliver the Fifth, or Richard the Fourth, Protector, by the grace of God, of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the dominions thereto belonging. The form of the great founder of the dynasty, on horseback, as when he led the charge at Naseby, or on foot, as when he took the mace from the table of the Commons, would adorn all our squares, and overlook our public offices from Charing-Cross; and sermons in his praise would be duly preached on his lucky day, the third of September, by court chaplains, guiltless of the abominations of the surplice.

But, though his memory has not been taken under the patronage of any party, though every device has been used to blacken it, though to praise him would long have been a punishable crime, yet truth and merit at last prevail. Cowards, who had trembled at the very sound of his name, tools of office who, like Downing, had been proud of the honour of lacqueying his coach, might insult him in loyal speeches and addresses. Venal poets might transfer to the King the same eulogies, little the worse for wear, which they had bestowed on the Protector. A fickle multitude might crowd to shout and scoff round the gibbeted remains of the greatest Prince and Soldier of the age. But when the Dutch cannon startled an effeminate tyrant in his own palace, when the conquests which had been made by the armies of Cromwell were sold to pamper the harlots of Charles, when Englishmen were sent to fight, under the banners of France, against the independence of Europe and the Protestant religion, many honest hearts swelled in secret at the thought of one who had never suffered his country to be ill-used by any but himself. It must indeed have been difficult for any Englishman to see the salaried Viceroy of France, at the most important crisis of his fate, sauntering through his harem, yawning and talking nonsense over a despatch, or beslobbering his brothers and his courtiers in a fit of maudlin affection,* without a respectful and tender remembrance of Him, before whose genius the young pride of Lewis, and the veteran craft of Mazarine, had stood rebuked; who had humbled Spain on the land, and Holland on the sea; and whose imperial voice had arrested the victorious arms of Sweden, and the persecuting fires of Rome. Even to the present day his character, though constantly attacked, and scarcely ever defended, is popular with the great body of our countrymen.

* These particulars, and many more of the same kind, are recorded by Pepys.

SURVEY OF THE GREEK, THE ROMAN, AND THE MODERN HISTORIANS.*

Herodotus — Thucydides — Xenophon — Polybius — Arrian — Livy — Sallust — Tacitus — Hume — Mitford — Lingard — Southey and Brodie.

To write History respectably—that is, to abbreviate despatches, and make extracts from speeches, to intersperse in due proportion epithets of praise and abhorrence, to draw up antithetical characters of great men, setting forth how many contradictory virtues and vices they united, and abounding in *withs* and *withouts*; all this is very easy. But to be a really great historian is perhaps the rarest of intellectual distinctions. Many scientific works are, in their kind, absolutely perfect. There are poems which we should be inclined to designate as faultless, or as disfigured only by blemishes which pass unnoticed in the general blaze of excellence. There are speeches, some speeches of Demosthenes particularly, in which it would be impossible to alter a word without altering it for the worse. But we are acquainted with no history which approaches to our notion of what a history ought to be—with no history which does not widely depart, either on the right hand or on the left, from the exact line.

The cause may easily be assigned. This province of literature is a debatable land. It lies on the confines of two distinct territories. It is under the jurisdiction of two hostile powers; and like other districts, similarly situated, it is ill defined, ill cultivated, and ill regulated. Instead of being equally shared between its two rulers, the Reason and the Imagination, it falls alternately under the sole and absolute dominion of each. It is sometimes fiction. It is sometimes theory.

History, it has been said, is philosophy teaching by examples. Unhappily, what the philosophy gains in soundness and depth, the examples generally lose in vividness. A perfect historian must possess an imagination sufficiently powerful to make his narrative affecting and picturesque. Yet he must control it so absolutely as to content himself with the materials which he finds, and to refrain from supplying deficiencies by additions of his own. He must be a profound and ingenious reasoner. Yet he must possess sufficient self-command to abstain from casting his facts in the mould of his hypothesis. Those who can justly estimate these almost insuperable difficulties will not think it strange that every writer should have failed, either in the narrative or in the speculative department of history.

It may be laid down as a general rule, though subject to considerable qualifications and exceptions, that history begins in Novel and ends in Essay. Of the romantic historians Herodotus is the earliest and the best. His animation, his simple-hearted tenderness, his wonderful talent for description and dialogue, and the pure sweet flow of his language, place him at the head of narrators. He reminds us of a delightful child. There is a grace beyond the reach of affectation in his awkwardness, a malice in his innocence, an intelligence in his nonsense, an insinuating eloquence in his lisp. We know of no writer who makes such interest for himself and his book in the heart of the reader. At the distance of three-and-twenty centuries, we feel for him the same sort of pitying fondness which Lafontaine and Gay are said to have inspired in society. He has written an

* *Neele's* Romance of History. London, 1828.—Vol. xlvii. page 331. May, 1826.

incomparable book. He has written something better, perhaps, than the best history; but he has not written a good history; he is, from the first to the last chapter, an inventor. We do not here refer merely to those gross fictions with which he has been reproached by the critics of later times. We speak of that colouring which is equally diffused over his whole narrative, and which perpetually leaves the most sagacious reader in doubt what to reject and what to receive. The most authentic parts of his work bear the same relation to his wildest legends, which Henry the Fifth bears to the Tempest. There was an expedition undertaken by Xerxes against Greece; and there was an invasion of France. There was a battle at Platæa; and there was a battle at Agincourt. Cambridge and Exeter, the Constable and the Dauphin, were persons as real as Demaratus and Pausanias. The harangue of the Archbishop on the Salic Law and the Book of Numbers differs much less from the orations which have in all ages proceeded from the Right Reverend bench, than the speeches of Mardonius and Artabanus, from those which were delivered at the Council-board of Susa. Shakspeare gives us enumerations of armies, and returns of killed and wounded, which are not, we suspect, much less accurate than those of Herodotus. There are passages in Herodotus nearly as long as acts of Shakspeare, in which everything is told dramatically, and in which the narrative serves only the purpose of stage-directions. It is possible, no doubt, that the substance of some real conversations may have been reported to the historian. But events which, if they ever happened, happened in ages and nations so remote that the particulars could never have been known to him, are related with the greatest minuteness of detail. We have all that Candaules said to Gyges, and all that passed between Astyages and Harpagus. We are therefore unable to judge whether, in the account which he gives of transactions respecting which he might possibly have been well informed, we can trust to anything beyond the naked outline; whether, for example, the answer of Gelon to the ambassadors of the Grecian confederacy, or the expressions which passed between Aristides and Themistocles at their famous interview, have been correctly transmitted to us. The great events are, no doubt, faithfully related. So, probably, are many of the slighter circumstances; but which of them it is impossible to ascertain. The fictions are so much like the facts, and the facts so much like the fictions, that, with respect to many most interesting particulars, our belief is neither given nor withheld, but remains in an uneasy and interminable state of abeyance. We know that there is truth, but we cannot exactly decide where it lies.

The faults of Herodotus are the faults of a simple and imaginative mind. Children and servants are remarkably Herodotean in their style of narration. They tell every thing dramatically. Their *says hes* and *says shes* are proverbial. Every person who has had to settle their disputes knows that, even when they have no intention to deceive, their reports of conversation always require to be carefully sifted. If an educated man were giving an account of the late change of administration, he would say—"Lord Goderich resigned; and the King, in consequence, sent for the Duke of Wellington." A porter tells the story as if he had been hid behind the curtains of the royal bed at Windsor: "So Lord Goderich says, 'I cannot manage this business; I must go out.' So the King says,—says he, 'Well, then, I must send for the Duke of Wellington—that's all.'" This is in the very manner of the father of history.

Herodotus wrote as it was natural that he should write. He wrote for a nation susceptible, curious, lively, insatiably desirous of novelty and excitement; for a nation in which the fine arts had attained their highest excellence, but in which philosophy was still in its infancy. His countrymen had but recently begun to cultivate prose composition. Public transactions had generally been recorded in verse. The first historians might, therefore, indulge, without fear of censure, in the licence allowed to their predecessors the bards. Books were few. The events of former times were learned from tradition and from popular ballads; the manners of foreign countries from the reports of travellers. It is well known that the mystery which overhangs what is distant, either in space or time, frequently prevents us from censuring as unnatural what we perceive to be impossible. We stare at a dragoon, who has killed three French cuirassiers, as a prodigy; yet we read, without the least disgust, how Godfrey slew his thousands, and Rinaldo his ten thousands. Within the last hundred years, stories about China and Bantam, which ought not to have imposed on an old nurse, were gravely laid down as foundations of political theories by eminent philosophers. What the time of the Crusades is to us, the generation of Crœsus and Solon was to the Greeks of the time of Herodotus. Babylon was to them what Pekin was to the French academicians of the last century.

For such a people was the book of Herodotus composed; and, if we may trust to a report, not sanctioned indeed by writers of high authority, but in itself not improbable, it was composed not to be read, but to be heard. It was not to the slow circulation of a few copies, which the rich only could possess, that the aspiring author looked for his reward. The great Olympian festival,—the solemnity which collected multitudes, proud of the Grecian name, from the wildest mountains of Doris, and the remotest colonies of Italy and Libya,—was to witness his triumph. The interest of the narrative, and the beauty of the style, were aided by the imposing effect of recitation,—by the splendour of the spectacle,—by the powerful influence of sympathy. A critic, who could have asked for authorities in the midst of such a scene, must have been of a cold and sceptical nature; and few such critics were there. As was the historian, such were the auditors,—inquisitive, credulous, easily moved by religious awe or patriotic enthusiasm. They were the very men to hear with delight of strange beasts, and birds, and trees,—of dwarfs, and giants, and cannibals—of gods, whose very names it was impiety to utter,—of ancient dynasties, which had left behind them monuments surpassing all the works of later times,—of towns like provinces,—of rivers like seas,—of stupendous walls, and temples, and pyramids,—of the rites which the Magi performed at day-break on the tops of the mountains,—of the secrets inscribed on the eternal obelisks of Memphis. With equal delight they would have listened to the graceful romances of their own country. They now heard of the exact accomplishment of obscure predictions, of the punishment of crimes over which the justice of heaven had seemed to slumber,—of dreams, omens, warnings from the dead,—of princesses, for whom noble suitors contended in every generous exercise of strength and skill,—of infants, strangely preserved from the dagger of the assassin, to fulfil high destinies.

As the narrative approached their own times, the interest became still more absorbing. The chronicler had now to tell the story of that great conflict, from which Europe dates its intellectual and political supremacy,—a story

which, even at this distance of time, is the most marvellous and the most touching in the annals of the human race,—a story abounding with all that is wild and wonderful, with all that is pathetic and animating; with the gigantic caprices of infinite wealth and despotic power,—with the mightier miracles of wisdom, of virtue, and of courage. He told them of rivers dried up in a day,—of provinces famished for a meal,—of a passage for ships hewn through the mountains,—of a road for armies spread upon the waves,—of monarchies and commonwealths swept away,—of anxiety, of terror, of confusion, of despair!—and then of proud and stubborn hearts tried in that extremity of evil, and not found wanting,—of resistance long maintained against desperate odds,—of lives dearly sold, when resistance could be maintained no more,—of signal deliverance, and of unsparing revenge. Whatever gave a stronger air of reality to a narrative so well calculated to inflame the passions, and to flatter national pride, was certain to be favourably received.

Between the time at which Herodotus is said to have composed his history and the close of the Peloponnesian war, about forty years elapsed,—forty years, crowded with great military and political events. The circumstances of that period produced a great effect on the Grecian character; and nowhere was this effect so remarkable as in the illustrious democracy of Athens. An Athenian, indeed, even in the time of Herodotus, would scarcely heve written a book so romantic and garrulous as that of Herodotus. As civilization advanced, the critizens of that famous republic became still less visionary, and still less simple-hearted. They aspired to know, where their ancestors had been content to doubt; they began to doubt, where their ancestors had thought it their duty to believe. Aristophanes is fond of alluding to this change in the temper of his countrymen. The father and son, in the clouds, are evidently representatives of the generations to which they respectively belonged. Nothing more clearly illustrates the nature of this moral revolution, than the change which passed upon tragedy. The wild sublimity of Æschylus became the scoff of every young Phidippides. Lectures on abstruse points of philosophy, the fine distinctions of casuistry, and the dazzling fence of rhetoric, were substituted for poetry. The language lost something of that infantine sweetness which had characterised it. It became less like the ancient Tuscan, and more like the modern French.

The fashionable logic of the Greeks was, indeed, far from strict. Logic never can be strict where books are scarce, and where information is conveyed orally. We are all aware how frequently fallacies, which, when set down on paper, are at once detected, pass for unanswerable arguments when dexterously and volubly urged in Parliament, at the bar, or in private conversation. The reason is evident. We cannot inspect them closely enough to perceive their inaccuracy. We cannot readily compare them with each other. We lose sight of one part of the subject, before another, which ought to be received in connexion with it, comes before us; and as there is no immutable record of what has been admitted, and of what has been denied, direct contradictions pass muster with little difficulty. Almost all the education of a Greek consisted in talking and listening. His opinions on government were picked up in the debates of the assembly. If he wished to study metaphysics, instead of shutting himself up with a book, he walked down to the market-place to look for a sophist. So completely were men formed to these habits, that even writing acquired a conversational

air. The philosophers adopted the form of dialogue, as the most natural mode of communicating knowledge. Their reasonings have the merits and the defects which belong to that species of composition; and are characterized rather by quickness and subtilty, than by depth and precision. Truth is exhibited in parts, and by glimpses. Innumerable clever hints are given; but no sound and durable system is erected. The *argumentum ad hominem*, a kind of argument most efficacious in debate, but utterly useless for the investigation of general principles, is among their favourite resources. Hence, though nothing can be more admirable than the skill which Socrates displays in the conversations which Plato has reported or invented, his victories, for the most part, seem to us unprofitable. A trophy is set up; but no new province is added to the dominions of the human mind.

Still, where thousands of keen and ready intellects were constantly employed in speculating on the qualities of actions, and on the principles of government, it was impossible that history should retain its old character. It became less gossiping and less picturesque; but much more accurate, and somewhat more scientific.

The history of Thucydides differs from that of Herodotus as a portrait differs from the representation of an imaginary scene; as the Burke or Fox of Reynolds differs from his Ugolino or his Beaufort. In the former case, the archetype is given: in the latter, it is created. The faculties which are required for the latter purpose are of a higher and rarer order than those which suffice for the former, and indeed necessarily comprise them. He who is able to paint what he sees with the eye of the mind, will surely be able to paint what he sees with the eye of the body. He who can invent a story, and tell it well, will also be able to tell, in an interesting manner, a story which he has not invented. If, in practice, some of the best writers of fiction have been among the worst writers of history, it has been because one of their talents had merged in another so completely, that it could not be severed; because, having long been habituated to invent and narrate at the same time, they found it impossible to narrate without inventing.

Some capricious and discontented artists have affected to consider portrait-painting as unworthy of a man of genius. Some critics have spoken in the same contemptuous manner of history. Johnson puts the case thus: The historian tells either what is false or what is true. In the former case he is no historian. In the latter, he has no opportunity for displaying his abilities. For truth is one; and all who tell the truth must tell it alike.

It is not difficult to elude both the horns of this dilemma. We will recur to the analogous art of portrait-painting. Any man with eyes and hands may be taught to take a likeness. The process, up to a certain point, is merely mechanical. If this were all, a man of talents might justly despise the occupation. But we could mention portraits which are resemblances,—but not mere resemblances; faithful,—but much more than faithful; portraits which condense into one point of time, and exhibit, at a single glance, the whole history of turbid and eventful lives—in which the eye seems to scrutinize us, and the mouth to command us—in which the brow menaces, and the lip almost quivers with scorn—in which every wrinkle is a comment on some important transaction. The account which Thucydides has given of the retreat from Syracuse is, among narratives, what Vandyk's Lord Strafford is among paintings.

Diversity, it is said, implies error; truth is one, and admits of no degrees. We answer, that this principle holds good only in abstract reasonings.

When we talk of the truth of imitation in the fine arts, we mean an imperfect and a graduated truth. No picture is exactly like the original; nor is a picture good in proportion as it is like the original. When Sir Thomas Lawrence paints a handsome peeress, he does not contemplate her through a powerful microscope, and transfer to the canvass the pores of the skin, the blood-vessels of the eye, and all the other beauties which Gulliver discovered in the Brobdignaggian maids of honour. If he were to do this, the effect would not merely be unpleasant, but, unless the scale of the picture were proportionably enlarged, would be absolutely *false*. And, after all, a microscope of greater power than that which he had employed, would convict him of innumerable omissions. The same may be said of history. Perfectly and absolutely true it cannot be: for to be perfectly and absolutely true, it ought to record *all* the slightest particulars of the slightest transactions—all the things done, and all the words uttered, during the time of which it treats. The omission of any circumstance, however insignificant, would be a defect. If history were written thus, the Bodleian library would not contain the occurrences of a week. What is told in the fullest and most accurate annals bears an infinitely small proportion to what is suppressed. The difference between the copious work of Clarendon, and the account of the civil wars in the abridgment of Goldsmith, vanishes, when compared with the immense mass of facts, respecting which both are equally silent.

No picture, then, and no history, can present us with the whole truth: but those are the best pictures and the best histories which exhibit such parts of the truth as most nearly produce the effect of the whole. He who is deficient in the art of selection may, by showing nothing but the truth, produce all the effect of the grossest falsehood. It perpetually happens that one writer tells less truth than another, merely because he tells more truths. In the imitative arts we constantly see this. There are lines in the human face, and objects in landscape, which stand in such relations to each other, that they ought either to be all introduced into a painting together, or all omitted together. A sketch into which none of them enters, may be excellent; but if some are given and others left out, though there are more points of likeness, there is less likeness. An outline scrawled with a pen, which seizes the marked features of a countenance, will give a much stronger idea of it than a bad painting in oils. Yet the worst painting in oils that ever hung at Somerset House resembles the original in many more particulars. A bust of white marble may give an excellent idea of a blooming face. Colour the lips and cheeks of the bust, leaving the hair and eyes unaltered, and the similarity, instead of being more striking, will be less so.

History has its foreground and its background: and it is principally in the management of its perspective, that one artist differs from another. Some events must be represented on a large scale, others diminished; the great majority will be lost in the dimness of the horizon; and a general idea of their joint effect will be given by a few slight touches.

In this respect, no writer has ever equalled Thucydides. He was a perfect master of the art of gradual diminution. His history is sometimes as concise as a chronological chart; yet it is always perspicuous. It is sometimes as minute as one of Lovelace's letters; yet it is never prolix. He never fails to contract and to expand it in the right place.

Thucydides borrowed from Herodotus the practice of putting speeches of

his own into the mouths of his characters. In Herodotus this usage is scarcely censurable. It is of a piece with his whole manner. But it is altogether incongruous in the work of his successor, and violates, not only the accuracy of history, but the decencies of fiction. When once we enter into the spirit of Herodotus, we find no inconsistency. The conventional probability of his drama is preserved from the beginning to the end. The deliberate orations, and the familiar dialogues, are in strict keeping with each other. But the speeches of Thucydides are neither preceded nor followed by anything with which they harmonize. They give to the whole book something of the grotesque character of those Chinese pleasure-grounds, in which perpendicular rocks of granite start up in the midst of a soft green plain. Invention is shocking, where truth is in such close juxta-position with it.

Thucydides honestly tells us that some of these discourses are purely fictitious. He may have reported the substance of others correctly. But it is clear from the internal evidence that he has preserved no more than the substance. His own peculiar habits of thought and expression are everywhere discernible. Individual and national peculiarities are seldom to be traced in the sentiments, and never in the diction. The oratory of the Corinthians and Thebans is not less attic, either in matter or in manner, than that of the Athenians. The style of Cleon is as pure, as austere, as terse, and as significant, as that of Pericles.

In spite of this great fault, it must be allowed that Thucydides has surpassed all his rivals in the art of historical narration, in the art of producing an effect on the imagination, by skilful selection and disposition, without indulging in the licence of invention. But narration, though an important part of the business of an historian, is not the whole. To append a moral to a work of fiction, is either useless or superfluous. A fiction may give a more impressive effect to what is already known, but it can teach nothing new. If it presents to us characters and trains of events to which our experience furnishes us with nothing similar, instead of deriving instruction from it, we pronounce it unnatural. We do not form our opinions from it; but we try it by our preconceived opinions. Fiction, therefore, is essentially imitative. Its merit consists in its resemblance to a model with which we are already familiar, or to which at least we can instantly refer. Hence it is that the anecdotes which interest us most strongly in authentic narrative, are offensive when introduced into novels; that what is called the romantic part of history, is in fact the least romantic. It is delightful as history, because it contradicts our previous notions of human nature, and of the connexion of causes and effects. It is, on that very account, shocking and incongruous in fiction. In fiction, the principles are given to find the facts: in history, the facts are given to find the principles; and the writer who does not explain the phenomena as well as state them, performs only one half of his office. Facts are the mere dross of history. It is from the abstract truth which interpenetrates them, and lies latent among them, like gold in the ore, that the mass derives its whole value: and the precious particles are generally combined with the baser in such a manner that the separation is a task of the utmost difficulty.

Here Thucydides is deficient: the deficiency, indeed, is not discreditable to him. It was the inevitable effect of circumstances. It was in the nature of things necessary that, in some part of its progress through political science, the human mind should reach that point which it attained in his time.

Knowledge advances by steps, and not by leaps. The axioms of an English debating club would have been startling and mysterious paradoxes to the most enlightened statesman of Athens. But it would be as absurd to speak contemptuously of the Athenian on this account, as to ridicule Strabo for not having given us an account of Chili, or to talk of Ptolemy as we talk of Sir Richard Phillips. Still, when we wish for solid geographical information, we must prefer the solemn coxcombry of Pinkerton to the noble work of Strabo. If we wanted instruction respecting the solar system, we should consult the silliest girl from a boarding-school, rather than Ptolemy.

Thucydides was undoubtedly a sagacious and reflecting man. This clearly appears from the ability with which he discusses practical questions. But the talent of deciding on the circumstances of a particular case is often possessed in the highest perfection by persons destitute of the power of generalization. Men skilled in the military tactics of civilized nations have been amazed at the far-sightedness and penetration which a Mohawk displays in concerting his stratagems, or in discerning those of his enemies. In England, no class possesses so much of that peculiar ability which is required for constructing ingenious schemes, and for obviating remote difficulties, as the thieves and the thief-takers. Women have more of this dexterity than men. Lawyers have more of it than statesmen: statesmen have more of it than philosophers. Monk had more of it than Harrington and all his club. Walpole had more of it than Adam Smith or Beccaria. Indeed, the species of discipline by which this dexterity is acquired, tends to contract the mind, and to render it incapable of abstract reasoning.

The Grecian statesmen of the age of Thucydides were distinguished by their practical sagacity, their insight into motives, their skill in devising means for the attainment of their ends. A state of society in which the rich were constantly planning the oppression of the poor, and the poor the spoliation of the rich, in which the ties of party had superseded those of country, in which revolutions and counter-revolutions were events of daily occurrence, was naturally prolific in desperate and crafty political adventurers. This was the very school in which men were likely to acquire the dissimulation of Mazarine, the judicious temerity of Richelieu, the penetration, the exquisite tact, the almost instinctive presentiment of approaching events which gave so much authority to the counsel of Shaftesbury, that "it was as if a man had inquired of the oracle of God." In this school Thucydides studied; and his wisdom is that which such a school would naturally afford. He judges better of circumstances than of principles. The more a question is narrowed, the better he reasons upon it. His work suggests many most important considerations respecting the first principles of government and morals, the growth of factions, the organization of armies, and the mutual relations of communities. Yet all his general observations on these subjects are very superficial. His most judicious remarks differ from the remarks of a really philosophical historian, as a sum correctly cast up by a book-keeper, from a general expression discovered by an algebraist. The former is useful only in a single transaction; the latter may be applied to an infinite number of cases.

This opinion will, we fear, be considered as heterodox. For, not to speak of the illusion which the sight of a Greek type, or the sound of a Greek diphthong, often produces, there are some peculiarities in the manner of Thucydides, which in no small degree have tended to secure to him the reputation of profundity. His book is evidently the book of a man and a

statesman; and in this respect presents a remarkable contrast to the delightful childishness of Herodotus. Throughout it there is an air of matured power, of grave and melancholy reflection, of impartiality, and habitual self-command. His feelings are rarely indulged, and speedily repressed. Vulgar prejudices of every kind, and particularly vulgar superstitions, he treats with a cold and sober disdain peculiar to himself. His style is weighty, condensed, antithetical, and not unfrequently obscure. But when we look at his political philosophy, without regard to these circumstances, we find him to have been, what indeed it would have been a miracle if he had not been, simply an Athenian of the fifth century before Christ.

Xenophon is commonly placed, but we think without much reason, in the same rank with Herodotus and Thucydides. He resembles them, indeed, in the purity and sweetness of his style; but in spirit, he rather resembles that later school of historians, whose works seem to be fables, composed for a moral, and who, in their eagerness to give us warnings and example, forget to give us men and women. The Life of Cyrus, whether we look upon it as a history or as a romance, seems to us a very wretched performance. The Expedition of the Ten Thousand, and the History of Grecian Affairs, are certainly pleasant reading; but they indicate no great power of mind. In truth, Xenophon, though his taste was elegant, his disposition amiable, and his intercourse with the world extensive, had, we suspect, rather a weak head. Such was evidently the opinion of that extraordinary man to whom he early attached himself, and for whose memory he entertained an idolatrous veneration. He came in only for the milk with which Socrates nourished his babes in philosophy. A few saws of morality, and a few of the simplest doctrines of natural religion, were enough for the good young man. The strong meat, the bold speculations on physical and metaphysical science, were reserved for auditors of a different description. Even the lawless habits of a captain of mercenary troops could not change the tendency which the character of Xenophon early acquired. To the last, he seems to have retained a sort of heathen Puritanism. The sentiments of piety and virtue which abound in his works, are those of a well-meaning man, somewhat timid and narrow-minded, devout from constitution rather than from rational conviction. He was as superstitious as Herodotus, but in a way far more offensive. The very peculiarities which charm us in an infant, the toothless mumbling, the stammering, the tottering, the helplessness, the causeless tears and laughter, are disgusting in old age. In the same manner, the absurdity which precedes a period of general intelligence is often pleasing; that which follows it is contemptible. The nonsense of Herodotus is that of a baby. The nonsense of Xenophon is that of a dotard. His stories about dreams, omens, and prophecies, present a strange contrast to the passages in which the shrewd and incredulous Thucydides mentions the popular superstitions. It is not quite clear that Xenophon was honest in his credulity; his fanaticism was in some degree politic. He would have made an excellent member of the Apostolic Camarilla. An Alarmist by nature, an Aristocrat by party, he carried to an unreasonable excess his horror of popular turbulence. The quiet atrocity of Sparta did not shock him in the same manner; for he hated tumult more than crimes. He was desirous to find restraints which might curb the passions of the multitude; and he absurdly fancied that he had found them in *a religion* without evidences or sanction, precepts or example, in a frigid *system of theo*philanthropy, supported by nursery tales.

Polybius and Arrian have given us authentic accounts of facts, and here their merit ends. They were not men of comprehensive minds; they had not the art of telling a story in an interesting manner. They have in consequence been thrown into the shade by writers, who, though less studious of truth than themselves, understood far better the art of producing effect, by Livy and Quintus Curtius.

Yet Polybius and Arrian deserve high praise, when compared with the writers of that school of which Plutarch may be considered as the head. For the historians of this class we must confess that we entertain a peculiar aversion. They seem to have been pedants, who, though destitute of those valuable qualities which are frequently found in conjunction with pedantry, thought themselves great philosophers and great politicians. They not only mislead their readers in every page, as to particular facts, but they appear to have altogether misconceived the whole character of the times of which they write. They were inhabitants of an empire bounded by the Atlantic Ocean and the Euphrates, by the ice of Scythia and the sands of Mauritania; composed of nations whose manners, whose languages, whose religion, whose countenances and complexions, were widely different, governed by one mighty despotism, which had risen on the ruins of a thousand commonwealths and kingdoms. Of liberty, such as it is in small democracies; of patriotism, such as it is in small independent communities of any kind, they had, and they could have, no experimental knowledge. But they had read of men who exerted themselves in the cause of their country, with an energy unknown in later times, who had violated the dearest of domestic charities, or voluntarily devoted themselves to death, for the public good; and they wondered at the degeneracy of their contemporaries. It never occurred to them, that the feelings which they so greatly admired sprung from local and occasional causes; that they will always grow up spontaneously in small societies; and that, in large empires, though they may be forced into existence for a short time by peculiar circumstances, they cannot be general or permanent. It is impossible that any man should feel for a fortress on a remote frontier, as he feels for his own house; that he should grieve for a defeat in which ten thousand people whom he never saw have fallen, as he grieves for a defeat which has half unpeopled the street in which he lives; that he should leave his home for a military expedition, in order to preserve the balance of power, as cheerfully as he would leave it to repel invaders who had begun to burn all the cornfields in his neighbourhood.

The writers of whom we speak should have considered this. They should have considered, that, in patriotism such as it existed amongst the Greeks, there was nothing essentially and eternally good; that an exclusive attachment to a particular society, though a natural, and, under certain restrictions, a most useful sentiment, implies no extraordinary attainments in wisdom or virtue; that where it has existed in an intense degree, it has turned states into gangs of robbers, whom their mutual fidelity has rendered more dangerous, has given a character of peculiar atrocity to war, and has generated that worst of all political evils, the tyranny of nations over nations.

Enthusiastically attached to the name of liberty, these historians troubled themselves little about its definition. The Spartans, tormented by ten thousand absurd restraints, unable to please themselves in the choice of their wives, their suppers, or their company, compelled to assume a peculiar manner, and to talk in a peculiar style, gloried in their liberty. The aris-

tocracy of Rome repeatedly made liberty a plea for cutting off the favourites of the people. In almost all the little commonwealths of antiquity, liberty was used as a pretext for measures directed against everything which makes liberty valuable, for measures which stifled discussion, corrupted the administration of justice, and discouraged the accumulation of property. The writers, whose works we are considering, confounded the sound with the substance, and the means with the end. Their imaginations were inflamed by mystery. They conceived of liberty as monks conceive of love, as Cockneys conceive of the happiness and innocence of rural life, as novel-reading sempstresses conceive of Almack's and Grosvenor Square, accomplished marquesses and handsome colonels of the guards. In the relation of events, and the delineation of characters, they have paid little attention to facts, to the costume of the times of which they pretend to treat, or to the general principles of human nature. They have been faithful only to their own puerile and extravagant doctrines. Generals and statesmen are metamorphosed into magnanimous coxcombs, from whose fulsome virtues we turn away with disgust. The fine sayings and exploits of their heroes remind us of the insufferable perfections of Sir Charles Grandison, and effect us with a nausea similar to that which we feel when an actor, in one of Morton's or Kotzebue's plays, lays his hand on his heart, advances to the ground-lights, and mouths a moral sentence for the edification of the Gods.

These writers, men who knew not what it was to have a country, men who had never enjoyed political rights, brought into fashion an offensive cant about patriotism and zeal for freedom. What the English Puritans did for the language of Christianity, what Scuderi did for the language of love, they did for the language of public spirit. By habitual exaggeration they made it mean. By monotonous emphasis they made it feeble. They abused it till it became scarcely possible to use it with effect.

Their ordinary rules of morality are deduced from extreme cases. The common regimen which they prescribe for society is made up of those desperate remedies which only its most desperate distempers require. They look with peculiar complacency on actions, which even those who approve them consider as exceptions to laws of almost universal application—which bear so close an affinity to the most atrocious crimes, that, even where it may be unjust to censure them, it is unsafe to praise them. It is not strange, therefore, that some flagitious instances of perfidy and cruelty should have been passed unchallenged in such company, that grave moralists, with no personal interest at stake, should have extolled, in the highest terms, deeds of which the atrocity appalled even the infuriated factions in whose cause they were perpetrated. The part which Timoleon took in the assassination of his brother, shocked many of his own partisans. The recollection of it preyed long on his own mind. But it was reserved for historians who lived some centuries later to discover that his conduct was a glorious display of virtue, and to lament that, from the frailty of human nature, a man who could perform so great an exploit could repent of it.

The writings of these men, and of their modern imitators, have produced effects which deserve some notice. The English have been so long accustomed to political speculation, and have enjoyed so large a measure of practical liberty, that such works have produced little effect on their minds. We have classical associations and great names of our own, which we can confidently oppose to the most splendid of ancient times. Senate has not to *our ears a sound* so venerable as Parliament. We respect the Great Charter

more than the laws of Solon. The Capitol and the Forum impress us with less awe than our own Westminster Hall and Westminster Abbey, the place where the great men of twenty generations have contended, the place where they sleep together! The list of warriors and statesmen by whom our constitution was founded and preserved, from Dr. Montfort down to Fox, may well stand a comparison with the Fasti of Rome. The dying thanksgiving of Sidney is as noble as the libation which Thrasea poured to Liberating Jove: and we think with far less pleasure of Cato tearing out his entrails, than of Russell saying, as he turned away from his wife, that the bitterness of death was past. Even those parts of our history, over which, on some accounts, we would gladly throw a veil, may be proudly opposed to those on which the moralists of antiquity loved most to dwell. The enemy of English liberty was not murdered by men whom he had pardoned and loaded with benefits. He was not stabbed in the back by those who smiled and cringed before his face. He was vanquished on fields of stricken battle; he was arraigned, sentenced, and executed in the face of heaven and earth. Our liberty is neither Greek nor Roman; but essentially English. It has a character of its own,—a character which has taken a tinge from the sentiments of the chivalrous ages, and which accords with the peculiarities of our manners and of our insular situation. It has a language, too, of its own, and a language singularly idiomatic, full of meaning to ourselves, scarcely intelligible to strangers.

Here, therefore, the effect of books, such as those which we have been considering, has been harmless. They have, indeed, given currency to many very erroneous opinions with respect to ancient history. They have heated the imaginations of boys. They have misled the judgment, and corrupted the taste, of some men of letters, such as Akenside and Sir William Jones. But on persons engaged in public affairs, they have had very little influence. The foundations of our constitution were laid by men who knew nothing of the Greeks, but that they denied the orthodox procession, and cheated the Crusaders; and nothing of Rome, but that the Pope lived there. Those who followed contented themselves with improving on the original plan. They found models at home; and therefore they did not look for them abroad. But when enlightened men on the Continent began to think about political reformation, having no patterns before their eyes in their domestic history, they naturally had recourse to those remains of antiquity, the study of which is considered throughout Europe as an important part of education. The historians of whom we have been speaking had been members of large communities, and subjects of absolute sovereigns. Hence it is, as we have already said, that they commit such gross errors in speaking of the little republics of antiquity. Their works were now read in the spirit in which they had been written. They were read by men placed in circumstances closely resembling their own, unacquainted with the real nature of liberty, but inclined to believe everything good which could be told respecting it. How powerfully these books impressed these speculative reformers is well known to all who have paid any attention to the French literature of the last century. But, perhaps, the writer on whom they produced the greatest effect was Vittorio Alfieri. In some of his plays, particularly in Virginia, Timoleon, and Brutus the Younger, he has even caricatured the extravagance of his masters.

It was not strange that the blind, thus led by the blind, should stumble. The transactions of the French Revolution, in some measure, took their

character from these works. Without the assistance of these works, a revolution would have taken place,—a revolution productive of much good and much evil, tremendous, but short-lived evil, dearly purchased, but durably good. But it would not have been exactly such a revolution. The style, the accessories, would have been in many respects different. There would have been less of bombast in language, less of affectation in manner, less of solemn trifling and ostentatious simplicity. The acts of legislative assemblies, and the correspondence of diplomatists, would not have been disgraced by rants worthy only of a college of declamation. The government of a great and polished nation would not have rendered itself ridiculous, by attempting to revive the usages of a world which had long passed away, or rather of a world which had never existed except in the description of a fantastic school of writers. These second-hand imitations resembled the originals about as much as the classical feast, with which the Doctor in Peregrine Pickle turned the stomachs of all his guests, resembled one of the suppers of Lucullus in the Hall of Apollo.

These were mere follies. But the spirit excited by these writers produced more serious effects. The greater part of the crimes which disgraced the revolution sprung, indeed, from the relaxation of law, from popular ignorance, from the remembrance of past oppression, from the fear of foreign conquest, from rapacity, from ambition, from party-spirit. But many atrocious proceedings must, doubtless, be ascribed to heated imagination, to perverted principle, to a distaste for what was vulgar in morals, and a passion for what was startling and dubious. Mr. Burke has touched on this subject with great felicity of expression: "The gradation of their republic," says he, "is laid in moral paradoxes. All those instances to be found in history, whether real or fabulous, of a doubtful public spirit, at which morality is perplexed, reason is staggered, and from which affrighted nature recoils, are their chosen and almost sole examples for the instruction of their youth." This evil, we believe, is to be directly ascribed to the influence of the historians whom we have mentioned, and their modern imitators.

Livy had some faults, in common with these writers; but on the whole he must be considered as forming a class by himself. No historian with whom we are acquainted has shown so complete an indifference to truth. He seems to have cared only about the picturesque effect of his book, and the honour of his country. On the other hand, we do not know, in the whole range of literature, an instance of a bad thing so well done. The painting of the narrative is beyond description vivid and graceful: the abundance of interesting sentiments and splendid imagery in the speeches is almost miraculous. His mind is a soil which is never overteemed, a fountain which never seems to trickle: it pours forth profusely; yet it gives no sign of exhaustion. It was probably to this exuberance of thought and language, always fresh, always sweet, always pure, no sooner yielded than repaired, that the critics applied that expression which has been so much discussed, *lactea ubertas*.

All the merits and all the defects of Livy take a colouring from the character of his nation. He was a writer peculiarly Roman; the proud citizen of a commonwealth, which had indeed lost the reality of liberty, but which still sacredly preserved its forms; in fact the subject of an arbitrary prince, but in his own estimation one of the masters of the world, with a hundred *kings* below him, and only the gods above him. He, therefore, looked

back on former times with feelings far different from those which were naturally entertained by his Greek contemporaries, and which at a later period became general among men of letters throughout the Roman Empire. He contemplated the past with interest and delight, not because it furnished a contrast to the present, but because it had led to the present. He recurred to it, not to lose in proud recollections the sense of national degradation, but to trace the progress of national glory. It is true that his veneration for antiquity produced on him some of the effects which it produced on those who arrived at it by a very different road. He has something of their exaggeration, something of their cant, something of their fondness for anomalies and *lusus naturæ* in morality. Yet even here we perceive a difference. They talk rapturously of patriotism and liberty in the abstract. He does not seem to think any country but Rome deserving of love; nor is it for liberty as liberty, but for liberty as a part of the Roman institutions, that he is zealous.

Of the concise and elegant accounts of the campaigns of Cæsar little can be said. They are incomparable models for military despatches. But histories they are not, and do not pretend to be.

The ancient critics placed Sallust in the same rank with Livy; and unquestionably the small portion of his works which has come down to us is calculated to give a high opinion of his talents. But his style is not very pleasant; and his most powerful work, the account of the conspiracy of Catiline, has rather the air of a clever party pamphlet than than of a history. It abounds with strange inconsistencies, which, unexplained as they are, necessarily excite doubts as to the fairness of the narrative. It is true, that many circumstances now forgotten may have been familiar to his contemporaries, and may have rendered passages clear to them which to us appear dubious and perplexing. But a great historian should remember that he writes for distant generations, for men who will perceive the apparent contradictions, and will possess no means of reconciling them. We can only vindicate the fidelity of Sallust at the expense of his skill. But, in fact, all the information which we have from contemporaries respecting this famous plot is liable to the same objection, and is read by discerning men with the same incredulity. It is all on one side. No answer has reached our times. Yet, on the showing of the accusers, the accused seem entitled to acquittal. Catiline, we are told, intrigued with a Vestal virgin, and murdered his own son. His house was a den of gamblers and debauchees. No young man could cross his threshold without danger to his fortune and reputation. Yet this is the man with whom Cicero was willing to coalesce in a contest for the first magistracy of the republic; and whom he described, long after the termination of the conspiracy, as an accomplished hypocrite, by whom he had himself been deceived, and who had acted with consummate skill the character of a good citizen and a good friend. We are told that the plot was the most wicked and desperate ever known; and, almost in the same breath, that the great body of the people, and many of the nobles favoured it; hat the richest citizens of Rome were eager for the spoliation of all property, and its highest functionaries for the destruction of all order; that Crassus, Cæsar, the Prætor Lentulus, one of the consuls of the year, one of the consuls elect, were proved or suspected to be engaged in a scheme for subverting institutions to which they owed the highest honours, and introducing universal anarchy. We are told, that a government, which knew all this, suffered the conspirator, whose rank, talents and cou-

rage rendered him most dangerous, to quit Rome without molestation. We are told, that bondmen and gladiators were to be armed against the citizens. Yet we find that Catiline rejected the slaves who crowded to enlist in his army, lest, as Sallust himself expresses it, "he should seem to identify their cause with that of the citizens." Finally, we are told that the magistrate, who was universally allowed to have saved all classes of his countrymen from conflagration and massacre, rendered himself so unpopular by his conduct, that a marked insult was offered to him at the expiration of his office, and a severe punishment inflicted on him shortly after.

Sallust tells us what, indeed, the letters and speeches of Cicero sufficiently prove, that some persons considered the shocking and atrocious parts of the plot as mere inventions of the government, designed to excuse its unconstitutional measures. We must confess ourselves to be of that opinion. There was, undoubtedly, a strong party desirous to change the administration. While Pompey held the command of an army, they could not effect their purpose without preparing means for repelling force, if necessary, by force. In all this there is nothing different from the ordinary practice of Roman factions. The other charges brought against the conspirators are so inconsistent and improbable, that we give no credit whatever to them. If our readers think this scepticism unreasonable, let them turn to the contemporary account of the Popish plot: let them look over the votes of Parliament, and the speeches of the King; the charges of Scroggs, and the harangues of the managers employed against Strafford. A person, who should form his judgment from these pieces alone, would believe that London was set on fire by the Papists, and that Sir Edmondbury Godfrey was murdered for his religion. Yet these stories are now altogether exploded: they have been abandoned by statesmen to aldermen, by aldermen to clergymen, by clergymen to old women, and by old women to Sir Harcourt Lees.

Of the Latin historians, Tacitus was certainly the greatest. His style indeed is not only faulty in itself, but is, in some respects, peculiarly unfit for historical composition. He carries his love of effect far beyond the limits of moderation. He tells a fine story finely: but he cannot tell a plain story plainly. He stimulates till stimulants lose their power. Thucydides, as we have already observed, relates ordinary transactions with the unpretending clearness and succinctness of a gazette. His great powers of painting he reserves for events, of which the slightest details are interesting. The simplicity of the setting gives additional lustre to the brilliants. There are passages in the narrative of Tacitus superior to the best which can be quoted from Thucydides: but they are not enchased and relieved with the same skill: they are far more striking when extracted from the body of the work to which they belong, than when they occur in their place, and are read in connexion with what precedes and follows.

In the delineation of character, Tacitus is unrivalled among historians, and has very few superiors among dramatists and novelists. By the delineation of character, we do not mean the practice of drawing up epigrammatic catalogues of good and bad qualities, and appending them to the names of eminent men. No writer, indeed, has done this more skilfully than Tacitus: but this is not his peculiar glory. All the persons who occupy a large space in his works have an individuality of character which seems to pervade all their words and actions. We know them as if we had lived with them. Claudius, Nero, Otho, both the Agrippinas, are master-

pieces. But Tiberius is a still higher miracle of art. The historian undertook to make us intimately acquainted with a man singularly dark and inscrutable,—with a man whose real disposition long remained swathed up in intricate folds of factitious virtues; and over whose actions the hypocrisy of his youth, and the seclusion of his old age, threw a singular mystery. He was to exhibit the specious qualities of the tyrant in a light which might render them transparent, and enable us at once to perceive the covering and the vices which it concealed. He was to trace the gradations by which the first magistrate of a republic, a senator mingling freely in debate, a noble associating with his brother nobles, was transformed into an Asiatic sultan. He was to exhibit a character distinguished by courage, self-command, and profound policy, yet defiled by all

> "the extravagancy
> And crazy ribaldry of fancy."

He was to mark the gradual effect of advancing age and approaching death on this strange compound of strength and weakness; to exhibit the old sovereign of the world sinking into a dotage which, though it rendered his appetites eccentric and his temper savage, never impaired the powers of his stern and penetrating mind—conscious of failing strength, raging with capricious sensuality, yet to the last the keenest of observers, the most artful of dissemblers, and the most terrible of masters. The task was one of extreme difficulty. The execution is almost perfect.

The talent which is required to write history thus, bears a considerable affinity to the talent of a great dramatist. There is one obvious distinction. The dramatist creates, the historian only disposes. The difference is not in the mode of execution, but in the mode of conception. Shakspeare is guided by a model which exists in his imagination; Tacitus, by a model furnished from without. Hamlet is to Tiberius what the Laocoon is to the Newton of Roubillac.

In this part of his art Tacitus certainly had neither equal nor second among the ancient historians. Herodotus, though he wrote in a dramatic form, had little of dramatic genius. The frequent dialogues which he introduces give vivacity and movement to the narrative; but are not strikingly characteristic. Xenophon is fond of telling his readers, at considerable length, what he thought of the persons whose adventures he relates; but he does not show them the men, and enable them to judge for themselves. The heroes of Livy are the most insipid of all beings, real or imaginary, the heroes of Plutarch always excepted. Indeed, the manner of Plutarch in this respect reminds us of the cookery of those continental inns, the horror of English travellers, in which a certain non-descript broth is kept constantly boiling, and copiously poured, without distinction, over every dish as it comes up to table. Thucydides, though at a wide interval, comes next to Tacitus. His Pericles, his Nicias, his Cleon, his Brasidas, are happily discriminated. The lines are few, the colouring faint; but the general air and expression is caught.

We begin, like the priest in Don Quixote's library, to be tired with taking down books one after another for separate judgment, and feel inclined to pass sentence on them in masses. We shall therefore, instead of pointing out the defects and merits of the different modern historians, state generally in what particulars they have surpassed their predecessors, and in what we conceive them to have failed.

They have certainly been, in one sense, far more strict in their adherence to truth than most of the Greek and Roman writers. They do not think themselves entitled to render their narrative interesting by introducing descriptions, conversations, and harangues, which have no existence but in their own imagination. This improvement was gradually introduced. History commenced among the modern nations of Europe, as it had commenced among the Greeks, in romance. Froissart was our Herodotus. Italy was to Europe what Athens was to Greece. In Italy, therefore, a more accurate and manly mode of narration was early introduced. Machiavelli and Guicciardini, in imitation of Livy and Thucydides, composed speeches for their historical personages. But as the classical enthusiasm which distinguished the age of Lorenzo and Leo gradually subsided, this absurd practice was abandoned. In France, we fear, it still, in some degree, keeps its ground. In our own country, a writer who should venture on it would be laughed to scorn. Whether the historians of the last two centuries tell more truth than those of antiquity, may perhaps be doubted; but it is quite certain that they tell fewer falsehoods.

In the philosophy of history, the moderns have very far surpassed the ancients. It is not, indeed, strange that the Greeks and Romans should not have carried the science of government, or any other experimental science, so far as it has been carried in our time; for the experimental sciences are generally in a state of progression. They were better understood in the seventeenth century than in the sixteenth, and in the eighteenth century than in the seventeenth. But this constant improvement, this natural growth of knowledge, will not altogether account for the immense superiority of the modern writers. The difference is a difference not in degree, but of kind. It is not merely that new principles have been discovered, but that new faculties seem to be exerted. It is not that at one time the human intellect should have made but small progress, and at another time have advanced far; but that at one time it should have been stationary, and at another time constantly proceeding. In taste and imagination, in the graces of style, in the arts of persuasion, in the magnificence of public works, the ancients were at least our equals. They reasoned as justly as ourselves on subjects which required pure demonstration. But in the moral sciences they made scarcely any advance. During the long period which elapsed between the fifth century before the Christian era, and the fifth century after it, little perceptible progress was made. All the metaphysical discoveries of all the philosophers, from the time of Socrates to the northern invasion, are not to be compared in importance with those which have been made in England every fifty years since the time of Elizabeth. There is not the least reason to believe that the principles of government, legislation, and political economy were better understood in the time of Augustus Cæsar than in the time of Pericles. In our own country, the sound doctrines of trade and jurisprudence have been, within the lifetime of a single generation, dimly hinted, boldly propounded, defended, systematized, adopted by all reflecting men of all parties, quoted in legislative assemblies, incorporated into laws and treaties.

To what is this change to be attributed? Partly, no doubt, to the discovery of printing, a discovery which has not only diffused knowledge widely, but, as we have already observed, has also introduced into reasoning a precision unknown in those ancient communities, in which information

for the most part, conveyed orally. There was, we suspect, another cause, less obvious, but still more powerful.

The spirit of the two most famous nations of antiquity was remarkably exclusive. In the time of Homer, the Greeks had not begun to consider themselves as a distinct race: they still looked with something of childish wonder and awe on the riches and wisdom of Sidon and Egypt. From what causes, and by what gradations, their feelings underwent a change, it is not easy to determine. Their history, from the Trojan to the Persian war, is covered with an obscurity broken only by dim and scattered gleams of truth. But it is certain that a great alteration took place. They regarded themselves as a separate people. They had common religious rites, and common principles of public law, in which foreigners had no part. In all their political systems, monarchical, aristocratical, and democratical, there was a strong family likeness. After the retreat of Xerxes and the fall of Mardonius, national pride rendered the separation between the Greeks and the barbarians complete. The conquerors considered themselves men of a superior breed, men who, in their intercourse with neighbouring nations, were to teach, and not to learn. They looked for nothing out of themselves. They borrowed nothing. They translated nothing. We cannot call to mind a single expression of any Greek writer, earlier than the age of Augustus, indicating an opinion, that anything worth reading could be written in any language except his own. The feelings which sprung from national glory were not altogether extinguished by national degradation. They were fondly cherished through ages of slavery and shame. The literature of Rome herself was regarded with contempt by those who had led before her arms, and who bowed beneath her fasces. Voltaire says, in one of his six thousand pamphlets, that he was the first person who told the French that England had produced eminent men besides the Duke of Marlborough. Down to a very late period, the Greeks seem to have stood in need of similar information with respect to their masters. With Paulus Emilius, Sylla, and Cæsar, they were well acquainted; but the notions which they entertained respecting Cicero and Virgil were, probably, not unlike those which Boileau may have formed about Shakspeare. Dionysius lived in the most splendid age of Latin poetry and eloquence. He was a critic, and, after the manner of his age, an able critic. He studied the language of Rome, associated with its learned men, and compiled its history. Yet he seems to have thought its literature valuable only for the purpose of illustrating its antiquities. His reading appears to have been confined to its public records, and to a few old annalists. Once, and but once, if we remember rightly, he quotes Ennius, to solve a question of etymology. He has written much on the art of oratory; yet he has not mentioned the name of Cicero.

The Romans submitted to the pretensions of a race which they despised. Their epic poet, while he claimed for them pre-eminence in the arts of government and war, acknowledged their inferiority in taste, eloquence, and science. Men of letters affected to understand the Greek language better than their own. Pomponius preferred the honour of becoming an Athenian, by intellectual naturalization, to all the distinctions which were to be acquired in the political contests of Rome. His great friend composed Greek poems and memoirs. It is well known that Petrarch considered that beautiful language in which his sonnets are written, as a barbarous jargon, and intrusted his fame to those wretched Latin hexameters, which, during the

last four centuries, have scarcely found four readers. Many eminent Romans appear to have felt the same contempt for their native tongue as compared with the Greek. The prejudice continued to a very late period Julian was as partial to the Greek language as Frederic the Great to the French: and it seems that he could not express himself with elegance in the dialect of the state which he ruled.

Even those Latin writers who did not carry this affectation so far, looked on Greece as the only fount of knowledge. From Greece they derived the measures of their poetry, and, indeed, all of poetry that can be imported. From Greece they borrowed the principles and the vocabulary of their philosophy. To the literature of other nations they do not seem to have paid the slightest attention. The sacred books of the Hebrews, for example, books which, considered merely as human compositions, are invaluable to the critic, the antiquarian, and the philosopher, seem to have been utterly unnoticed by them. The peculiarities of Judaism, and the rapid growth of Christianity, attracted their notice. They made war against the Jews. They made laws against the Christians. But they never opened the books of Moses. Juvenal quotes the Pentateuch with censure: the author of the treatise on "the Sublime" quotes it with praise: but both of them quote it erroneously. When we consider what sublime poetry, what curious history, what striking and peculiar views of the Divine nature, and of the social duties of men, are to be found in the Jewish scriptures: when we consider that the two sects, on which the attention of the government was constantly fixed, appealed to those scriptures as the rule of their faith and practice, this indifference is astonishing. The fact seems to be, that the Greeks admired only themselves, and that the Romans admired only themselves and the Greeks. Literary men turned away with disgust from modes of thought and expression so widely different from all that they had been accustomed to admire. The effect was narrowness and sameness of thought. Their minds, if we may so express ourselves, bred in and in, and were accordingly cursed with barrenness and degeneracy. No extraneous beauty or vigour was engrafted on the decaying stock. By an exclusive attention to one class of phenomena, by an exclusive taste for one species of excellence, the human intellect was stunted. Occasional coincidences were turned into general rules. Prejudices were confounded with instincts. On man, as he was found in a particular state of society,—on government, as it had existed in a particular corner of the world, many just observations were made; but of man as man, or government as government, little was known. Philosophy remained stationary. Slight changes, sometimes for the worse and sometimes for the better, were made in the superstructure. But nobody thought of examining the foundations.

The vast despotism of the Cæsars, gradually effacing all national peculiarities, and assimilating the remotest provinces of the Empire to each other, augmented the evil. At the close of the third century after Christ, the prospects of mankind were fearfully dreary. A system of etiquette, as pompously frivolous as that of the Escurial, had been established. A sovereign almost invisible; a crowd of dignitaries minutely distinguished by badges and titles; rhetoricians who said nothing but what had been said ten thousand times; schools in which nothing was taught but what had been known *for ages;*—such was the machinery provided for the government and instruction of the most enlightened part of the human race. That great *community* was then in danger of experiencing a calamity far more terrible

han any of the quick, inflammatory, destroying maladies, to which nations are liable,—a tottering, drivelling, paralytic longevity, the immortality of the Struldbrugs, a Chinese civilization. It would be easy to indicate many points of resemblance between the subjects of Diocletian and the people of that Celestial Empire where, during many centuries, nothing has been learned or unlearned; where government, where education, where the whole system of life, is a ceremony; where knowledge forgets to increase and multiply, and, like the talent buried in the earth, or the pound wrapped up in the napkin, experiences neither waste nor augmentation.

The torpor was broken by two great revolutions, the one moral, the other political, the one from within, the other from without. The victory of Christianity over Paganism, considered with relation to this subject only, was of great importance. It overthrew the old system of morals, and with much of the old system of metaphysics. It furnished the orator with new topics of declamation, and the logician with new points of controversy. Above all, it introduced a new principle, of which the operation was constantly felt in every part of society. It stirred the stagnant mass from the utmost depths. It excited all the passions of a stormy democracy in the quiet and listless population of an overgrown empire. The fear of heresy did what the sense of oppression could not do: it changed men, accustomed to be turned over like sheep from tyrant to tyrant, into devoted partisans and obstinate rebels. The tones of an eloquence which had been silent for ages, resounded from the pulpit of Gregory. A spirit, which had been extinguished on the plains of Philippi, revived in Athanasius and Ambrose.

Yet even this remedy was not sufficiently violent for the disease. It did not prevent the empire of Constantinople from relapsing, after a short paroxysm of excitement, into a state of stupefaction, to which history furnishes scarcely any parallel. We there find that a polished society, a society in which a most intricate and elaborate system of jurisprudence was established, in which the arts of luxury were well understood, in which the works of the great ancient writers were preserved and studied, existed for nearly a thousand years without making one great discovery in science, or producing one book which is read by any but curious inquirers. There were tumults, too, and controversies, and wars, in abundance: and these things, bad as they are in themselves, have generally been favourable to the progress of the intellect. But here they tormented without stimulating. The waters were troubled, but no healing influence descended. The agitations resembled the grinnings and writhings of a galvanized corpse, not the struggles of an athletic man.

From this miserable state the Western Empire was saved by the fiercest and most destroying visitation with which God has ever chastened his creatures—the invasion of the Northern nations. Such a cure was required for such a distemper. The Fire of London, it has been observed, was a blessing: it burned down the city, but it burned out the plague. The same may be said of the tremendous devastation of the Roman dominions. It annihilated the noisome recesses in which lurked the seeds of great moral maladies: it cleared an atmosphere fatal to the health and vigour of the human mind. It cost Europe a thousand years of barbarism to escape the fate of China.

At length the terrible purification was accomplished; and the second civilization of mankind commenced, under circumstances which afforded a strong security that it would never retrograde and never pause. Europe

was now a great federal community: her numerous states were united by the easy ties of international law and a common religion. Their institutions, their languages, their manners, their tastes in literature, their modes of education, were widely different. Their connexion was close enough to allow of mutual observation and improvement, yet not so close as to destroy the idioms of national opinion and feeling.

The balance of moral and intellectual influence thus established between the nations of Europe, is far more important than the balance of political power. Indeed, we are inclined to think that the latter is valuable principally because it tends to maintain the former. The civilized world has thus been preserved from an uniformity of character fatal to all improvement. Every part of it has been illuminated with light reflected from every other. Competition has produced activity where monopoly would have produced sluggishness. The number of experiments in moral science, which the speculator has an opportunity of witnessing, has been increased beyond all calculation. Society and human nature, instead of being seen in a single point of view, are presented to him under ten thousand different aspects. By observing the manners of surrounding nations, by studying their literature, by comparing it with that of his own country and of the ancient republics, he is enabled to correct those errors into which the most acute men must fall when they reason from a single species to a genus. He learns to distinguish what is local from what is universal; what is transitory from what is eternal; to discriminate between exceptions and rules; to trace the operation of disturbing causes; to separate those general principles which are always true and everywhere applicable, from the accidental circumstances with which, in every community, they are blended, and with which, in an isolated community, they are confounded by the most philosophical mind.

Hence it is, that in generalization, the writers of modern times have far surpassed those of antiquity. The historians of our own country are unequalled in depth and precision of reason; and even in the works of our mere compilers, we often meet with speculations beyond the reach of Thucydides or Tacitus.

But it must, at the same time, be admitted that they have characteristic faults, so closely connected with their characteristic merits, and of such magnitude, that it may well be doubted whether, on the whole, this department of literature has gained or lost during the last two-and-twenty centuries.

The best historians of later times have been seduced from truth, not by their imagination, but by their reason. They far excel their predecessors in the art of deducing general principles from facts; but unhappily they have fallen into the error of distorting facts to suit general principles. They arrive at a theory from looking at some of the phenomena, and the remaining phenomena they strain or curtail to suit the theory. For this purpose it is not necessary that they should assert what is absolutely false, for all questions in morals and politics are questions of comparison and degree. Any proposition which does not involve a contradiction in terms may, by possibility, be true; and if all the circumstances which raise a probability in its favour be stated and enforced, and those which lead to an opposite *conclusion* be omitted or lightly passed over, it may appear to be demonstrated. In every human character and transaction there is a mixture of *good and evil*: a little exaggeration, a little suppression, a judicious use of

epithets, a watchful and searching scepticism with respect to the evidence on one side, a convenient credulity with respect to every report or tradition on the other, may easily make a saint of Laud, or a tyrant of Henry the Fourth.

This species of misrepresentation abounds in the most valuable works of modern historians. Herodotus tells his story like a slovenly witness, who, heated by partialities and prejudices, unacquainted with the established rules of evidence, and uninstructed as to the obligations of his oath, confounds what he imagines with what he has seen and heard, and brings out facts, reports, conjectures, and fancies, in one mass. Hume is an accomplished advocate: without positively asserting much more than he can prove, he gives prominence to all the circumstances which support his case; he glides lightly over those which are unfavourable to it; his own witnesses are applauded and encouraged; the statements which seem to throw discredit on them are controverted; the contradictions into which they fall are explained away; a clear and connected abstract of their evidence is given. Everything that is offered on the other side is scrutinized with the utmost severity; every suspicious circumstance is a ground for comment and invective; what cannot be denied is extenuated, or passed by without notice; concessions even are sometimes made—but this insidious candour only increases the effect of the vast mass of sophistry.

We have mentioned Hume, as the ablest and most popular writer of his class; but the charge which we have brought against him is one to which all our most distinguished historians are in some degree obnoxious. Gibbon, in particular, deserves very severe censure. Of all the numerous culprits, however, none is more deeply guilty than Mr. Mitford. We willingly acknowledge the obligations which are due to his talents and industry. The modern historians of Greece had been in the habit of writing as if the world had learned nothing new during the last sixteen hundred years. Instead of illustrating the events which they narrated, by the philosophy of a more enlightened age, they judged of antiquity by itself alone. They seemed to think that notions, long driven from every other corner of literature, had a prescriptive right to occupy this last fastness. They considered all the ancient historians as equally authentic. They scarcley made any distinction between him who related events at which he had himself been present, and him who five hundred years after composed a philosophic romance for a society which had in the interval undergone a complete change. It was all Greek, and all true! The centuries which separated Plutarch from Thucydides seemed as nothing to men who lived in an age so remote. The distance of time produced an error similar to that which is sometimes produced by distance of place. There are many good ladies who think that all the people in India live together, and who charge a friend setting out for Calcutta with kind messages to Bombay. To Rollin and Barthelemi, in the same manner, all the classics were contemporaries.

Mr. Mitford certainly introduced great improvements; he showed us that men who wrote in Greek and Latin sometimes told lies; he showed us that ancient history might be related in such a manner as to furnish not only illusions to schoolboys, but important lessons to statesmen. From that love of theatrical effect and high-flown sentiment which had poisoned almost every other work on the same subject, his book is perfectly free. But his passion for a theory as false, and far more ungenerous, led him substantially *to violate truth* in every page. Statements unfavourable to

democracy are made with unhesitating confidence, and with the utmost bitterness of language. Every charge brought against a monarch, or an aristocracy, is sifted with the utmost care. If it cannot be denied, some palliating supposition is suggested, or we are at least reminded that some circumstances now unknown *may* have justified what at present appears unjustifiable. Two events are reported by the same author in the same sentence; their truth rests on the same testimony; but the one supports the darling hypothesis, and the other seems inconsistent with it. The one is taken, and the other is left.

The practice of distorting narrative into a conformity with theory is a vice not so unfavourable as at first sight it may appear, to the interests of political science. We have compared the writers who indulge in it to advocates; and we may add, that their conflicting fallacies, like those of advocates, correct each other. It has always been held, in the most enlightened nations, that a tribunal will decide a judicial question most fairly when it has heard two able men argue, as unfairly as possible, on the two opposite sides of it; and we are inclined to think that this opinion is just. Sometimes, it is true, superior eloquence and dexterity will make the worse appear the better reason; but it is at least certain that the judge will be compelled to contemplate the case under two different aspects. It is certain that no important consideration will altogether escape notice.

This is at present the state of history. The Poet Laureate appears for the Church of England, Lingard for the Church of Rome. Brodie has moved to set aside the verdicts obtained by Hume; and the cause in which Mitford succeeded is, we understand, about to be reheard. In the midst of these disputes, however, history proper, if we may use the term, is disappearing. The high, grave, impartial summing up of Thucydides is nowhere to be found.

While our historians are practising all the arts of controversy, they miserably neglect the art of narration, the art of interesting the affections, and presenting pictures to the imagination. That a writer may produce these effects without violating truth, is sufficiently proved by many excellent biographical works. The immense popularity which well-written books of this kind have required, deserves the serious consideration of historians. Voltaire's Charles the Twelfth, Marmontel's Memoirs, Boswell's Life of Johnson, Southey's account of Nelson, are perused with delight by the most frivolous and indolent. Whenever any tolerable book of the same description makes its appearance, the circulating libraries are mobbed; the book societies are in commotion; the new novel lies uncut; the magazines and newspapers fill their columns with extracts. In the meantime, histories of great empires, written by men of eminent ability, lie unread on the shelves of ostentatious libraries.

The writers of history seem to entertain an aristocratical contempt for the writers of memoirs. They think it beneath the dignity of men, who describe the revolutions of nations, to dwell on the details which constitute the charm of biography. They have imposed on themselves a code of conventional decencies, as absurd as that which has been the bane of the French drama. The most characteristic and interesting circumstances are omitted or softened down, because, as we are told, they are too trivial for the majesty of history. The majesty of history seems to resemble the majesty of the poor King of Spain, who died a martyr to ceremony, because the proper dignitaries were not at hand to render him assistance.

That history would be more amusing if this etiquette were relaxed, will, we suppose, be acknowledged. But would it be less dignified or less useful? What do we mean, when we say that one past event is important, and another insignificant? No past event has any intrinsic importance. The knowledge of it is valuable only as it leads us to form just calculations with respect to the future. A history which does not serve this purpose, though it may be filled with battles, treaties, and commotions, is as useless as the series of turnpike-tickets collected by Sir Matthew Mite.

Let us suppose that Lord Clarendon, instead of filling hundreds of folio pages with copies of state papers, in which the same assertions and contradictions are repeated, till the reader is overpowered with weariness, had condescended to be the Boswell of the Long Parliament. Let us suppose that he had exhibited to us the wise and lofty self-government of Hampden, leading while he seemed to follow, and propounding unanswerable arguments in the strongest forms, with the modest air of an inquirer anxious for information; the delusions which misled the noble spirit of Vane; the coarse fanaticism which concealed the yet loftier genius of Cromwell, destined to control a mutinous army and a factious people, to abase the flag of Holland, to arrest the victorious arms of Sweden, and to hold the balance firm between the rival monarchies of France and Spain. Let us suppose that he had made his Cavaliers and Roundheads talk in their own style; that he had reported some of the ribaldry of Rupert's pages, and some of the cant of Harrison and Fleetwood. Would not his work in that case have been more interesting? Would it not have been more accurate?

A history, in which every particular incident may be true, may on the whole be false. The circumstances which have most influence on the happiness of mankind, the changes of manners and morals, the transition of communities from poverty to wealth, from knowledge to ignorance, from ferocity to humanity,—these are, for the most part, noiseless revolutions. Their progress is rarely indicated by what historians are pleased to call important events. They are not achieved by armies, or enacted by senates. They are sanctioned by no treaties, and recorded in no archives. They are carried on in every school, in every church, behind ten thousand counters, at ten thousand firesides. The upper current of society presents no certain criterion by which we can judge of the direction in which the under current flows. We read of defeats and victories. But we know that nations may be miserable amidst victories, and prosperous amidst defeats. We read of the fall of wise ministers, and of the rise of profligate favourites. But we must remember how small a proportion the good or evil effected by a single statesman can bear to the good or evil of a great social system.

Bishop Watson compares a geologist to a gnat mounted on an elephant, and laying down theories as to the whole internal structure of the vast animal, from the phenomena of the hide. The comparison is unjust to the geologists; but it is very applicable to those historians who write as if the body politic were homogeneous, who look only on the surface of affairs, and never think of the mighty and various organization which lies deep below.

In the works of such writers as these, England, at the close of the Seven Years' War, is in the highest state of prosperity: at the close of the American war she is in a miserable and degraded condition; as if the people were not on the whole as rich, as well governed, and as well educated, at the latter period as at the former. We have read books called Histories of

England, under the reign of George the Second, in which the rise of Methodism is not even mentioned. A hundred years hence this breed of authors will, we hope, be extinct. If it should still exist, the late ministerial interregnum will be described in terms which will seem to imply that all government was at an end; that the social contract was annulled, and that the hand of every man was against his neighbour, until the wisdom and virtue of the new cabinet educed order out of the chaos of anarchy. We are quite certain that misconceptions as gross prevail at this moment, respecting many important parts of our annals.

The effect of historical reading is analogous, in many respects, to that produced by foreign travel. The student, like the tourist, is transported into a new state of society. He sees new fashions: he hears new modes of expression. His mind is enlarged by contemplating the wide diversities of laws, of morals, and of manners. But men may travel far, and return with minds as contracted as if they had never stirred from their own market-town. In the same manner, men may know the dates of many battles, and the genealogies of many royal houses, and yet be no wiser. Most people look at past times, as princes look at foreign countries. More than one illustrious stranger has landed on our island amidst the shouts of a mob, has dined with the King, has hunted with the master of the stag-hounds, has seen the Guards reviewed, and a knight of the garter installed; has cantered along Regent Street; has visited St. Paul's, and noted down its dimensions; and has then departed, thinking that he has seen England. He has, in fact, seen a few public buildings, public men, and public ceremonies. But of the vast and complex system of society, of the fine shades of national character, of the practical operation of government and laws, he knows nothing. He who would understand these things rightly must not confine his observations to palaces and solemn days. He must see ordinary men as they appear in their ordinary business and in their ordinary pleasures. He must mingle in the crowds of the exchange and the coffee-house. He must obtain admittance to the convivial table and the domestic hearth. He must bear with vulgar expressions. He must not shrink from exploring even the retreats of misery. He who wishes to understand the condition of mankind in former ages, must proceed on the same principle. If he attends only to public transactions, to wars, congresses, and debates, his studies will be as unprofitable as the travels of those imperial, royal and serene sovereigns, who form their judgment of our island from having gone in state to a few fine sights, and from having held formal conferences with a few great officers.

The perfect historian is he in whose work the character and spirit of an age is exhibited in miniature. He relates no fact, he attributes no expression to his characters, which is not authenticated by sufficient testimony. But by judicious selection, rejection, and arrangement, he gives to truth those attractions which have been usurped by fiction. In his narrative a due subordination is observed; some transactions are prominent, others retire. But the scale on which he represents them is increased or diminished, not according to the dignity of the persons concerned in them, but according to the degree in which they elucidate the condition of society and the nature of man. He shows us the court, the camp, and the senate. But he shows us also the nation. He considers no anecdote, no peculiarity of manner, no familiar saying, as too insignificant for his notice, which is not too insignificant to illustrate the operation of laws, of religion, and of educa-

tion, and to mark the progress of the human mind. Men will not merely be described, but will be made intimately known to us. The changes of manners will be indicated, not merely by a few general phrases, or a few extracts from statistical documents, but by appropriate images presented in every line.

If a man, such as we are supposing, should write the history of England, he would assuredly not omit the battles, the sieges, the negotiations, the seditions, the ministerial changes. But with these he would intersperse the details which are the charm of historical romances. At Lincoln Cathedral there is a beautiful painted window, which was made by an apprentice out of the pieces of glass which had been rejected by his master. It is so far superior to every other in the church, that, according to the tradition, the vanquished artist killed himself from mortification. Sir Walter Scott, in the same manner, has used those fragments of truth which historians have scornfully thrown behind them, in a manner which may well excite their envy. He has constructed out of their gleanings works which, even considered as histories, are scarcely less valuable than theirs. But a truly great historian would reclaim those materials which the novelist has appropriated. The history of the government, and the history of the people, would be exhibited in that mode in which alone they can be exhibited justly, in inseparable conjunction and intermixture. We should not then have to look for the wars and votes of the Puritans in Clarendon, and for their phraseology in Old Mortality; for one half of King James in Hume, and for the other half in the Fortunes of Nigel.

The early part of our imaginary history would be rich with colouring from romance, ballad, and chronicle. We should find ourselves in the company of knights such as those of Froissart, and of pilgrims such as those who rode with Chaucer from the Tabard. Society would be shown from the highest to the lowest,—from the royal cloth of state to the den of the outlaw; from the throne of the legate, to the chimney-corner where the begging friar regaled himself. Palmers, minstrels, crusaders,—the stately monastery, with the good cheer in its refectory, and the high-mass in its chapel,—the manor-house, with its hunting and hawking,—the tournament, with the heralds and ladies, the trumpets and the cloth of gold,—would give truth and life to the representation. We should perceive, in a thousand slight touches, the importance of the privileged burgher, and the fierce and haughty spirit which swelled under the collar of the degraded villain. The revival of letters would not merely be described in a few magnificent periods. We should discern, in innumerable particulars, the fermentation of mind, the eager appetite for knowledge, which distinguished the sixteenth from the fifteenth century. In the Reformation we should see, not merely a schism which changed the ecclesiastical constitution of England, and the mutual relations of the European powers, but a moral war which raged in every family, which set the father against the son and the son against the father, the mother against the daughter and the daughter against the mother. Henry would be painted with the skill of Tacitus. We should have the change of his character, from his profuse and joyous youth, to his savage and imperious old age. We should perceive the gradual progress of selfish and tyrannical passions, in a mind not naturally insensible or ungenerous; and to the last we should detect some remains of that open and noble temper, which endeared him to a people whom he oppressed, struggling with the hardness of despotism, and the irritability of disease. We should see

Elizabeth in all her weakness, and in all her strength, surrounded by the handsome favourites, whom she never trusted, and the wise old statesmen, whom she never dismissed, uniting in herself the most contradictory qualities of both her parents,—the coquetry, the caprice, the petty malice of Anne, —the haughty and resolute spirit of Henry. We have no hesitation in saying, that a great artist might produce a portrait of this remarkable woman, at least as striking as that in the novel of Kenilworth, without employing a single trait not authenticated by ample testimony. In the meantime, we should see arts cultivated, wealth accumulated, the conveniences of life improved. We should see the keeps, where nobles, insecure themselves, spread insecurity around them, gradually giving place to the halls of graceful opulence, to the oriels of Longleat, and the stately pinnacles of Burleigh. We should see towns extended, deserts cultivated, the hamlets of fishermen turned into wealthy havens, the meal of the peasant improved, and his hut more commodiously furnished. We should see those opinions and feelings which produced the great struggle against the house of Stuart slowly growing up in the bosom of private families, before they manifested themselves in parliamentary debates. Then would come the Civil War. Those skirmishes, on which Clarendon dwells so minutely, would be told, as Thucydides would have told them, with perspicuous conciseness. They are merely connecting links. But the great characteristics of the age, the loyal enthusiasm of the brave English gentry, the fierce licentiousness of the swearing, dicing, drunken reprobates, whose excesses disgraced the royal cause—the austerity of the Presbyterian Sabbaths in the city, the extravagance of the independent preachers in the camp,—the precise garb, the severe countenance, the petty scruples, the affected accent, the absurd names and phrases which marked the Puritans,—the valour, the policy, the public spirit, which lurked beneath these ungraceful disguises, —the dreams of the raving Fifth-monarchy-man,—the dreams, scarcely less wild, of the philosophic republican,—all these would enter into the representation, and render it at once more exact and more striking.

The instruction derived from history, thus written, would be of a vivid and practical character. It would be received by the imagination as well as by the reason. It would be not merely traced on the mind, but branded into it. Many truths, too, would be learned, which can be learned in no other manner. As the history of states is generally written, the greatest and most momentous revolutions seem to come upon them like supernatural inflictions, without warning or cause. But the fact is, that such revolutions are almost always the consequences of moral changes, which have gradually passed on the mass of the community, and which ordinarily proceed far, before their progress is indicated by any public measure. An intimate knowledge of the domestic history of nations, is therefore absolutely necessary to the prognosis of political events. A narrative, defective in this respect, is as useless as a medical treatise, which should pass by all the symptoms attendant on the early stage of a disease, and mention only what occurs when the patient is beyond the reach of remedies.

An historian, such as we have been attempting to describe, would indeed be an intellectual prodigy. In his mind, powers, scarcely compatible with each other, must be tempered into an exquisite harmony. We shall sooner see another Shakspeare or another Homer. The highest excellence to which any single faculty can be brought, would be less surprising than such *a happy and* delicate combination of qualities. Yet the contemplation of

imaginary models is not an unpleasant or useless employment of the mind. It cannot indeed produce perfection, but it produces improvement, and nourishes that generous and liberal fastidiousness, which is not inconsistent with the strongest sensibility to merit, and which, while it exalts our conceptions of the art, does not render us unjust to the artist.

CERVANTES, FIELDING, SMOLLETT, RICHARDSON, STERNE, MISS EDGEWORTH, and MISS BURNEY.*

There is an exclamation in one of Gray's letters—"Be mine to read eternal new romances of Marivaux and Crebillon!" If we did not utter a similar aspiration at the conclusion of the Wanderer, it was not from any want of affection for the class of writing to which it belongs; for, without going quite so far as the celebrated French philosopher, who thought that more was to be learnt from good novels and romances, than from the gravest treatises on history and morality, we must confess, that there are few works to which we oftener turn for profit or delight, than to the standard productions in this species of composition. With the exception of the violently satirical, and the violently sentimental specimens of the art, we find there the closest imitation of men and manners; and are admitted to examine the very web and texture of society, as it really exists, and as we meet with it when we come into the world. If the style of poetry has "something more divine in it," this savours more of humanity. We are brought acquainted with an infinite variety of characters—all a little more amusing, and, for the greater part, more true to general nature than those which we meet with in actual life—and have our moral impressions far more frequently called out, and our moral judgments exercised, than in the busiest career of existence. As a record of past manners and opinions, too, such writings afford both more minute and more abundant information than any other. To give one example only:—We should really be at a loss where to find, in any authentic documents of the same period, so satisfactory an account of the general state of society, and of moral, political and religious feeling, in the reign of George II, as we meet with in the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and his friend Mr. Abraham Adams. This work, indeed, we take to be a perfect piece of statistics in its kind; and do not know from what other quarter we could have acquired the solid information it contains, even as to this comparatively recent period. What a thing it would be to have such a work of the age of Pericles or Alexander! and how much more would it teach us as to the true character and condition of the people among whom it was produced, than all the tragedies and histories, and odes and orations, that have been preserved of their manufacture! In looking into such grave and ostentatious performances, we see little but the rigid skeleton of public transactions—exaggerations of party zeal, and vestiges of literary ambition; and if we wish really to know what was the state of manners and of morals, and in what way, and into what forms, principles and institutions were actually moulded in practice, we cannot do better than refer to the works of those writers, who having no other object than to imitate nature, could only hope for success from the

* The Wanderer, or Female Difficulties, by Madame D'Arblay.—Vol. xxiv. page 320. February, 1815.

fidelity of their pictures; and were bound (in their own defence) to reduce the boasts of vague theorists, and the exaggerations of angry disputants, to the mortifying standard of reality.

We will here confess, however, that we are a little prejudiced on the point in question; and that the effect of many fine speculations has been lost upon us, from an early familiarity with the most striking passages in the little work to which we have just alluded. Thus, nothing can be more captivating than the description somewhere given by Mr. Burke, of the indissoluble connexion between learning and nobility; and of the respect universally paid by wealth to piety and morals. But the effect of this splendid representation has always been spoiled to us, by our recollection of Parson Adams sitting over his cup of ale in Sir Thomas Booby's kitchen. Echard "on the Contempt of the Clergy," in like manner, is certainly a very good book, and its general doctrine most just and reasonable; but an unlucky impression of the reality of Parson Trulliber always checks, in us, the respectful emotions to which it should give rise: while the lecture which Lady Booby reads to Lawyer Scout on the expulsion of Joseph and Fanny from the parish, casts an unhappy shade over the splendid pictures of practical jurisprudence that are to be found in the works of Blackstone or De Lolme. The most moral writers, after all, are those who do not pretend to inculcate any moral: the professed moralist almost unavoidably degenerates into the partisan of a system; and the philosopher warps the evidence to his own purpose. But the painter of manners gives the facts of human nature, and leaves us to draw the inference: if we are not able to do this, or do it ill, at least it is our own fault.

The first-rate writers in this class are of course few; but those few we may reckon, without scruple, among the greatest ornaments and the best benefactors of our kind. There is a certain set of them, who, as it were, take their rank by the side of reality, and are appealed to as evidence on all questions concerning human nature. The principal of these are Cervantes and Le Sage: and, among ourselves, Fielding, Richardson, Smollett, and Sterne.* As this is a department of criticism which deserves more attention than we have ever yet bestowed on it, we shall venture to treat it a little in detail; and endeavour to contribute something towards settling the standard of excellence, both as to degree and kind, in these several writers.

We shall begin with the renowned history of Don Quixote; who always presents something more stately, more romantic, and at the same time more real to the imagination, than any other hero upon record. His lineaments, his accoutrements, his pasteboard visor, are familiar to us, as the recollections of our early home. The spare and upright figure of the hero paces distinctly before our eyes: and Mambrino's helmet still glitters in the sun! We not only feel the greatest love and veneration for the knight himself, but a certain respect for all those connected with him—the Curate, and Master Nicholas the Barber—Sancho and Dapple—and even for Rosinante's leanness and his errors! Perhaps there is no work which combines so much originality with such an air of truth. Its popularity is almost unexampled; and yet its real merits have not been sufficiently understood. The story is the least part of them; though the blunders of Sancho, and the unlucky adventures of his master, are what naturally catch the attention of ordinary

* We have not forgotten De Foe as one of our own writers. The author of Robinson Crusoe was an Englishman; and one of those Englishmen who make us proud of the name.

readers. The pathos and dignity of the sentiments are often disguised under the ludicrousness of the subject; and provoke laughter when they might well draw tears. The character of Don Quixote itself is one of the most perfect disinterestedness. He is an enthusiast of the most amiable kind—of a nature equally open, gentle and generous; a lover of truth and justice, and one who had brooded over the fine dreams of chivalry and romance, till the dazzling visions cheated his brain into a belief of their reality. There cannot, in our opinion, be a greater mistake than to consider Don Quixote as a merely satirical work, or an attempt to explode, by coarse raillery, "the long-forgotten order of chivalry." There could be no need to explode what no longer existed. Besides, Cervantes himself was a man of the most sanguine and enthusiastic temperament; and even through the crazed and battered figure of the knight, the spirit of chivalry shines out with undiminished lustre; and one might almost imagine that the author had half-designed to revive the example of past ages, and once more "witch the world with noble horsemanship;" and had veiled the design, in scorn of the degenerate age to which it was addressed, under this fantastic and imperfect disguise of romantic and ludicrous exaggeration. However that may be, the spirit which the book breathes, to those who relish and understand it best, is unquestionably the spirit of chivalry: nor perhaps is it too much to say, that, if ever the flame of Spanish liberty is destined to break forth, wrapping the tyrant and the tyranny in one consuming blaze, it is owing to Cervantes and his knight of La Mancha, that the spark of generous sentiment and romantic enterprise from which it must be kindled, has not been quite extinguished.

The character of Sancho is not more admirable in the execution, than in the conception, as a relief to that of the knight. The contrast is as picturesque and striking as that between the figures of Rosinante and Dapple. Never was there so complete a *partie carrée*;—they answer to one another at all points. Nothing can surpass the truth of physiognomy in the description of the master and man, both as to body and mind;—the one lean and tall, the other round and short;—the one heroical and courteous, the other selfish and servile;—the one full of high-flown fancies, the other a bag of proverbs;—the one always starting some romantic scheme, the other always keeping to the safe side of tradition and custom. The gradual ascendancy, too, obtained by Don Quixote over Sancho, is as finely managed as it is characteristic. Credulity, and a love of the marvellous, are as natural to ignorance as selfishness and cunning. Sancho by degrees becomes a kind of lay-brother of the order; acquires a taste for adventures in his own way, and is made all but an entire convert, by the discovery of the hundred crowns in one of his most comfortless journeys. Towards the end, his regret at being forced to give up the pursuit of knight-errantry, almost equals his master's; and he seizes the proposal of Don Quixote to turn shepherds, with the greatest avidity,—still applying it, however, in his own fashion; for while the Don is ingeniously torturing the names of his humble acquaintance into classical terminations, and contriving scenes of gallantry and song, Sancho exclaims, "Oh, what delicate wooden spoons shall I carve! what crumbs and cream shall I devour!"—forgetting, in his milk and fruits, the pullets and geese at Camacho's wedding.

This intuitive perception of the hidden analogies of things, or, as it may be called, this *instinct of imagination*, is what stamps the character of genius on the productions of art, more than any other circumstance: for it

works unconsciously, like nature, and receives its impressions from a kind of inspiration. There is more of this unconscious power in Cervantes than in any other author, except Shakspeare. Something of the same kind extends itself to all the subordinate parts and characters of the work. Thus we find the curate confidentially informing Don Quixote, that if he could get the ear of the government, he has something of considerable importance to propose for the good of the state; and the knight afterwards meets with a young gentleman, who is a candidate for poetical honours, with a mad lover, a forsaken damsel, etc.,—all delineated with the same inimitable force, freedom, and fancy. The whole work breathes that air of romance, —that aspiration after imaginary good,—that longing after something more than we possess, that in all places, and in all conditions of life,

> ——"still prompts the eternal sigh,
> For which we wish to live, or dare to die!"

The characters in Don Quixote are strictly individuals; that is, they do not belong to, but form a class of themselves. In other words, the actions and manners of the chief *dramatis personæ*, do not arise out of the actions and manners of those around them, or the condition of life in which they are placed, but out of the peculiar dispositions of the persons themselves, operated upon by certain impulses of imagination and accident: yet these impulses are so true to nature, and their operation so truly described, that we not only recognize the fidelity of the representation, but recognize it with all the advantages of novelty superadded. They are unlike any thing we have actually seen—may be said to be purely ideal—and yet familiarize themselves more readily with our imagination, and are retained more strongly in memory, than perhaps any others:—they are never lost in the crowd. One test of the truth of this ideal painting is, the number of allusions which Don Quixote has furnished to the whole of civilized Europe—that is to say, of appropriate cases, and striking illustrations of the universal principles of our nature. The common incidents and descriptions of human life are, however, quite familiar and natural: and we have nearly the same insight given us here, into the characters of inn-keepers, bar-maids, ostlers, and puppet-show men, as in Fielding himself. There is a much greater mixture, however, of sentiment with *naïveté*, of the pathetic with the quaint and humorous, than there ever is in Fielding. We might instance the story of the countryman, whom Don Quixote and Sancho met in their search after Dulcinea, driving his mules to plough at break of day, and "singing the ancient song of Roncesvalles!" The episodes which are introduced, are excellent; but have, upon the whole, been overrated. Compared with the serious tales in Boccacio, they are trifling. That of Marcella, the fair shepherdness, is the best. We will only add, that Don Quixote is an entirely original work in its kind, and that the author has the highest honour which can belong to one, that of being the founder of a new style of writing.

There is another Spanish novel, Gusman d'Alfarache, nearly of the same age as Don Quixote, and of great genius, though it can hardly be ranked as a novel, or a work of imagination. It is a series of strange adventures, rather drily told, but accompanied by the most severe and sarcastic commentary. The satire, the wit, the eloquence, and reasoning, are of the most powerful kind; but they are didactic, rather than dramatic. They would suit a sermon or a pasquinade better than a romance. Still there are in this extraordinary book, occasional sketches of character, and hu-

morous descriptions, to which it would be difficult to produce any thing superior. This work, which is hardly known in this country except by name, has the credit, without any reason, of being the original of Gil Blas. There is only one incident the same, that of the supper at the inn. In all other respects, these two works are the very reverse of each other, both in their excellences and defects.

Gil Blas is, next to Don Quixote, more generally read and admired than any other novel—and, in one sense, deservedly so: for it is at the head of its class, though that class is very different from, and inferior to the other. There is very little individual character in Gil Blas. The author is a describer of manners, and not of character. He does not take the elements of human nature, and work them up into new combinations (which is the excellence of Don Quixote); nor trace the peculiar and striking combinations of folly and knavery as they are to be found in real life (like Fielding); but he takes off, as it were, the general habitual impression which circumstances make on certain conditions of life, and moulds all his characters accordingly. All the persons whom he introduces carry about with them the badge of their profession; and you see little more of them than their costume. He describes men as belonging to certain classes in society—the highest, generally, and the lowest, and such as are found in great cities—not as they are in themselves, or with the individual differences which are always to be found in nature. His hero, in particular, has no character but that of the accidental circumstances in which he is placed. His priests are only described as priests: his valets, his players, his women, his courtiers, and his sharpers are all the same. Nothing can well exceed the monotony of the work in this respect; at the same time that nothing can exceed the truth and precision with which the general manners of these different characters are preserved, nor the felicity of the particular traits by which their leading foibles are brought out to notice. Thus, the Archbishop of Grenada will remain an everlasting memento of the weakness of human vanity; and the account of Gil Blas's legacy, of the uncertainty of human expectations. This novel is as deficient in the fable as in the characters. It is not a regularly constructed story, but a series of adventures told with equal gaiety and good sense, and in the most graceful style possible.

It has been usual to class our own great novelists as imitators of one or other of these two writers. Fielding, no doubt, is more like Don Quixote than Gil Blas; Smollett is more like Gil Blas than Don Quixote; but there is not much resemblance in either case. Sterne's Tristram Shandy is a more direct instance of imitation. Richardson can scarcely be called an imitator of any one; or, if he is, it is of the sentimental refinement of Marivaux, or the verbose gallantry of the writers of the seventeenth century.

There is very little to warrant the common idea, that Fielding was an imitator of Cervantes,—except his own declaration of such an intention in the title-page of Joseph Andrews,—the romantic turn of the character of Parson Adams (the only romantic character in his works),—and the proverbial humour of Partridge, which is kept up only for a few pages. Fielding's novels are, in general, thoroughly his own; and they are thoroughly English. What they are most remarkable for is, neither sentiment, nor imagination, nor wit, nor humour, though there is a great deal of this last quality; but profound knowledge of human nature—at least of English nature—and masterly pictures of the characters of men as he saw them existing. This quality distinguishes all his works, and is shown almost

losophical experiment, and the ease and simplicity of a casual obser
The truth of the imitation is indeed so great, that it has been argu
Fielding must have had his materials ready-made to his hands, a
merely a transcriber of local manners and individual habits. For thi
jecture, however, there seems to be no foundation. His representati
is true, are local and individual, but they are not the less profou
natural. The feeling of the general principles of human nature opera
particular circumstances is always intense, and uppermost in his min
he makes use of incident and situation, only to bring out character.

It is perhaps scarcely necessary to give any illustration of these re
Tom Jones is full of them. The moral of this book has been objec
and not altogether without reason—but a more serious objection ha
made to the want of refinement and elegance in the two principal c
ters. We never feel this objection, indeed, while we are reading the
but at other times, we have something like a lurking suspicion that
was but an awkward fellow, and Sophia a pretty simpleton. We
know how to account for this effect, unless it is that Fielding's con
assuring us of the beauty of his hero, and the good sense of his hero
last produces a distrust of both. The story of Tom Jones is allowe
unrivalled: and it is this circumstance, together with the vast va
characters, that has given the history of a Foundling so decided
ference over Fielding's other novels. The characters themselves,
Amelia and Joseph Andrews, are quite equal to any of those in Tom
The account of Miss Mathews and Ensign Hibbert—the way in whi
lady reconciles herself to the death of her father—the inflexible
Bath, the insipid Mrs. James, the complaisant Colonel Trent—the d
sly, intriguing, equivocal Mrs. Bennet—the lord who is her seduc
who attempts afterwards to seduce Amelia by the same mechanical
of a concert-ticket. a book. and the disguise of a great coat—his li

of character, and surprises you no less by what he leaves in the dark, (hardly known to the persons themselves,) than by the unexpected discoveries he makes of the real traits and circumstances in a character with which, till then, you find you were unacquainted. There is nothing at all heroic, however, in the style of any of his delineations. He never draws lofty characters or strong passions;—all his persons are of the ordinary stature as to intellect; and none of them trespass on the angelic nature, by elevation of fancy, or energy of purpose. Perhaps, after all, Parson Adams is his finest character. It is equally true to nature, and more ideal than any of the others. Its unsuspecting simplicity makes it not only more amiable, but doubly amusing, by gratifying the sense of superior sagacity in the reader. Our laughing at him does not once lessen our respect for him. His declaring that he would willingly walk ten miles to fetch his sermon on vanity, merely to convince Wilson of his thorough contempt of this vice, and his consoling himself for the loss of his Æschylus, by suddenly recollecting that he could not read it if he had it, because it is dark, are among the finest touches of *naïveté*. The night-adventures at Lady Booby's with Beau Didapper, and the amiable Slipslop, are the most ludicrous; and that with the huntsman, who draws off the hounds from the poor Parson, because they would be spoiled by following *vermin*, the most profound. Fielding did not often repeat himself: but Dr. Harrison, in Amelia, may be considered as a variation of the Character of Adams: so also is Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield; and the latter part of that work, which sets out so delightfully, an almost entire plagiarism from Wilson's account of himself, and Adams's domestic history.

Smollett's first novel, Roderick Random, which is also his best, appeared about the same time as Fielding's Tom Jones; and yet it has a much more modern air with it: but this may be accounted for, from the circumstance that Smollett was quite a young man at the time, whereas Fielding's manner must have been formed long before. The style of Roderick Random, though more scholastic and elaborate, is stronger and more pointed than that of Tom Jones; the incidents follow one another more rapidly (though it must be confessed they never come in such a throng, or are brought out with the same dramatic facility); the humour is broader, and as effectual; and there is very nearly, if not quite, an equal interest excited by the story. What then is it that gives the superiority to Fielding? It is the superior insight into the springs of human character, and the constant developement of that character through every change of circumstance. Smollett's humour often arises from the situation of the persons, or the peculiarity of their external appearance, as, from Roderick Random's carrotty locks, which hung down over his shoulders like a pound of candles, or Strap's ignorance of London, and the blunders that follow from it. There is a tone of vulgarity about all his productions. The incidents frequently resemble detached anecdotes taken from a newspaper or magazine; and, like those in Gil Blas, might happen to a hundred other characters. He exhibits only the external accidents and reverses to which human life is liable—not "the stuff" of which it is composed. He seldom probes to the quick, or penetrates beyond the surface of his characters: and therefore he leaves no stings in the minds of his readers, and in this respect is far less interesting than Fielding. His novels always enliven, and never tire us: we take them up with pleasure, and lay them down without any strong feeling of regret. We *look on and laugh*, as spectators of an amusing though inele-

gant scene, without closing in with the combatants, or being made parties in the event. We read Roderick Random as an entertaining story; for the particular accidents and modes of life which it describes have ceased to exist: but we regard Tom Jones as a real history; because the author never stops short of those essential principles which lie at the bottom of all our actions, and in which we feel an immediate interest;—*intus et in cute.*—Smollett excels most as the lively caricaturist: Fielding as the exact painter and profound metaphysician. We are far from maintaining, that this account applies uniformly to the productions of these two writers; but we think that, as far as they essentially differ, what we have stated is the general distinction between them. Roderick Random is the purest of Smollett's novels; we mean in point of style and description. Most of the incidents and characters are supposed to have been taken from the events of his own life; and are therefore truer to nature. There is a rude conception of generosity in some of his characters, of which Fielding seems to have been incapable; his amiable persons being merely good-natured. It is owing to this, we think, that Strap is superior to Partridge; and there is a heartiness and warmth of feeling in some of the scenes between Lieutenant Bowling and his nephew, which is beyond Fielding's power of impassioned writing. The whole of the scene on ship-board is a most admirable and striking picture, and, we imagine, very little, if at all, exaggerated, though the interest it excites is of a very unpleasant kind. The picture of the little profligate French friar, who was Roderick's travelling companion, and of whom he always kept to the windward, is one of Smollett's most masterly sketches. Peregrine Pickle is no great favourite of ours, and Launcelot Greaves was not worthy of the genius of the author.

Humphry Clinker and Count Fathom are both equally admirable in their way. Perhaps the former is the most pleasant gossiping novel that ever was written—that which gives the most pleasure with the least effort to the reader. It is quite as amusing as going the journey could have been, and we have just as good an idea of what happened on the road as if we had been of the party. Humphry Clinker himself is exquisite; and his sweetheart, Winifred Jenkins, nearly as good. Matthew Bramble, though not altogether original, is excellently supported, and seems to have been the prototype of Sir Anthony Absolute in the Rivals. But Lismahago is the flower of the flock. His tenaciousness in argument is not so delightful as the relaxation of his logical severity, when he finds his fortune mellowing with the wintry smiles of Mrs. Tabitha Bramble. This is the best preserved and most original of all Smollett's characters. The resemblance of Don Quixote is only just enough to make it interesting to the critical reader, without giving offence to any body else. The indecency and filth in this novel, are what must be allowed to all Smollett's writings. The subject and characters in Count Fathom are, in general, exceedingly disgusting; the story is also spun out to a degree of tediousness in the serious and sentimental parts; but there is more power of writing occasionally shown in it than in any of his works. We need only refer to the fine and bitter irony of the Count's address to the country of his ancestors on landing in England; to the robber-scene in the forest, which has never been surpassed; to the Parisian swindler, who personates a raw English country squire (Western is tame in the comparison); and to the story of the seduction in the west of England. We should have some difficulty to point out, in any author, passages written with more force and nature than these.

It is not, in our opinion, a very difficult attempt to class Fielding or Smollett:—the one as an observer of the characters of human life; the other as a describer of its various eccentricities. But it is by no means so easy to dispose of Richardson, who was neither an observer of the one, nor a describer of the other; but who seemed to spin his materials entirely out of his own brain, as if there had been nothing existing in the world beyond the little shop in which he sat writing. There is an artificial reality about his works, which is nowhere to be met with. They have the romantic air of a pure fiction, with the literal minuteness of a common diary. The author had the strangest matter of fact imagination that ever existed, and wrote the oddest mixture of poetry and prose. He does not appear to have taken advantage of any thing in actual nature, from one end of his works to the other; and yet, throughout all his works (voluminous as they are—and this, to be sure, is one reason why they are so), he sets about describing every object and transaction, as if the whole had been given in on evidence by an eye-witness. This kind of high finishing from imagination is an anomaly in the history of human genius; and certainly nothing so fine was ever produced, by the same accumulation of minute parts. There is not the least distraction, the least forgetfulness of the end: every circumstance is made to tell. We cannot agree that this exactness of detail produces heaviness; on the contrary, it gives an appearance of truth, and a positive interest to the story; and we listen with the same attention as we should to the particulars of a confidential communication. We at one time used to think some parts of Sir Charles Grandison rather trifling and tedious, especially the long description of Miss Harriet Byron's wedding-clothes, till we met with two young ladies who had severally copied out the whole of that very description for their own private gratification. After this, we could not blame the author.

The effect of reading this work, is like an increase of kindred: you find yourself all of a sudden introduced into the midst of a large family, with aunts and cousins to the third and fourth generation, and grandmothers both by the father's and mother's side,—and a very odd set of people too, but people whose real existence and personal identity you can no more dispute than your own senses,—for you see and hear all that they do or say. What is still more extraordinary, all this extreme elaborateness in working out the story, seems to have cost the author nothing; for it is said that the published works are mere abridgments. We have heard (though this, we suppose, must be a pleasant exaggeration) that Sir Charles Grandison was originally written in eight and twenty volumes.

Pamela is the first of his productions, and the very child of his brain. Taking the general idea of the character of a modest and beautiful country girl, and of the situation in which she is placed, he makes out all the rest, even to the smallest circumstance, by the mere force of a reasoning imagination. It would seem as if a step lost would be as fatal here as in a mathematical demonstration. The development of the character is the most simple, and comes the nearest to nature that it can do, without being the same thing. The interest of the story increases with the dawn of understanding and reflection in the heroine. Her sentiments gradually expand themselves, like opening flowers. She writes better every time, and acquires a confidence in herself, just as a girl would do, writing such letters in such circumstances; and yet it is certain *that no girl would write such letters in such circumstances.* What we mean is this: Richardson's

nature is always the nature of sentiment and reflection, not of impulse or situation. He furnishes his characters, on every occasion, with the presence of mind of the author. He makes them act, not as they would from the impulse of the moment, but as they might upon reflection, and upon a careful review of every motive and circumstance in their situation. They regularly sit down to write letters; and if the business of life consisted in letter-writing, and was carried on by the post (like a Spanish game at chess), human nature would be what Richardson represents it. All actual objects and feelings are blunted and deadened by being presented through a medium which may be true to reason, but is false in nature. He confounds his own point of view with that of the immediate actors in the scene; and hence presents you with a conventional and factitious nature, instead of that which is real. Dr. Johnson seems to have preferred this truth of reflection to the truth of nature, when he said that there was more knowledge of the human heart in a page of Richardson than in all Fielding. Fielding, however, saw more of the practical results, and understood the principles as well; but he had not the same power of speculating upon their possible results, and combining them in certain ideal forms of passion and imagination, which was Richardson's real excellence.

It must be observed, however, that it is this mutual good understanding, and comparing of notes between the author and the persons he describes; his infinite circumspection; his exact process of ratiocination and calculation, which gives such an appearance of coldness and formality to most of his characters,—which makes prudes of his women, and coxcombs of his men. Every thing is too conscious in his works. Every thing is distinctly brought home to the mind of the actors in the scene, which is a fault undoubtedly; but then, it must be confessed, every thing is brought home in its full force to the mind of the reader also; and we feel the same interest in the story as if it were our own. Can any thing be more beautiful or affecting than Pamela's reproaches to her "lumpish heart" when she is sent away from her master's at her own request—its lightness, when she is sent for back—the joy which the conviction of the sincerity of his love diffuses in her heart, like the coming-on of spring—the artifice of the stuff gown—the meeting with Lady Davers after her marriage—and the trial scene with her husband? Who ever remained insensible to the passion of Lady Clementina, except Sir Charles Grandison himself, who was the object of it? Clarissa is, however, his masterpiece, if we except Lovelace. If she is fine in herself, she is still fine in his account of her. With that foil, her purity is dazzling indeed; and she who could triumph by her virtue, and the force of her love, over the regality of Lovelace's mind, his wit, his person, his accomplishments and his spirit, conquers all hearts. We should suppose that never sympathy more deep or sincere was excited than by the heroine of Richardson's romance, except by the calamities of real life. The links in this wonderful chain of interest are not more finely wrought, than their whole weight is overwhelming and irresistible. Who can forget the exquisite gradations of her long dying scene, or the closing of the coffin-lid, when Miss Howe comes to take her last leave of her friend; or the heart-breaking reflection that Clarissa makes on what was to have been her wedding-day? Well does a modern writer exclaim—

> "Books are a real world, both pure and good,
> Round which, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
> Our pastime and our happiness may grow!"

Richardson's wit was unlike that of any other writer;—his humour was o too. Both were the effect of intense activity of mind;—laboured, and yet ompletely effectual. We might refer to Lovelace's reception and descrip- ion of Hickman, when he calls out Death in his ear, as the name of the erson with whom Clarissa had fallen in love; and to the scene at the glove- hop. What can be more magnificent than his enumeration of his com- anions—"Belton so pert and so pimply—Tourville so fair and so foppish," tc.? In casuistry, he is quite at home; and, with a boldness greater even han his puritanical severity, has exhausted every topic on virtue and vice. There is another peculiarity in Richardson, not perhaps so uncommon, which s, his systematically preferring his most insipid characters to his finest, hough both were equally his own invention, and he must be supposed to ave understood something of their qualities. Thus he preferred the little, elfish, affected, insignificant Miss Byron, to the divine Clementina; and gain, Sir Charles Grandison, to the nobler Lovelace. We have nothing o say in favour of Lovelace's morality; but Sir Charles is the prince of coxcombs,—whose eye was never once taken from his own person, and his own virtues; and there is nothing which excites so little sympathy as this excessive egotism.

It remains to speak of Sterne;—and we shall do it in few words. There is more of *mannerism* and affectation in him, and a more immediate reference to preceding authors;—but his excellences, where he is excellent, are of the first order. His characters are intellectual and inventive, like Richardson's—but totally opposite in the execution. The one are made out by continuity, and patient repetition of touches; the others, by rapid and masterly strokes, and graceful opposition. His style is equally different from Richardson's:—it is at times the most rapid,—the most happy,—the most idiomatic of any of our novel writers. It is the pure essence of English conversational style. His works consist only of *morceaux*,—of brilliant passages. His wit is poignant, though artificial;—and his characters (though the groundwork has been laid before) have yet invaluable original differences;—and the spirit of the execution, the master-strokes constantly thrown into them, are not to be surpassed. It is sufficient to name them—Yorick, Dr. Slop, Mr. Shandy, my Uncle Toby, Trim, Susanna, and the Widow Wadman; and in these he has contrived to oppose, with equal felicity and originality, two characters,—one of pure intellect, and the other of pure good-nature, in my Father and my Uncle Toby. There appears to have been in Sterne a vein of dry, sarcastic humour, and of extreme tenderness of feeling;—the latter sometimes carried to affectation, as in the tale of Maria, and the apostrophe to the recording angel;—but at other times pure, and without blemish. The story of Le Fevre is perhaps the finest in the English language. My Father's restlessness, both of body and mind, is inimitable. It is the model from which all those despicable performances against modern philosophy ought to have been copied, if their authors had known any thing of the subject they were writing about. My Uncle Toby is one of the finest compliments ever paid to human nature. He is the most unoffending of God's creatures; or, as the French express it—*un petit bon homme!* Of his bowling-green,—his sieges,—and his amours, who would say or think any thing amiss?

It is remarkable that our four best novel-writers belong nearly to the same age. We also owe to the same period (the reign of George II.) the inimitable Hogarth, and some of our best writers of the middle style of comedy. If

we were called upon to account for this coincidence, we should waive the consideration of more general causes (as, that imagination naturally descends with the progress of civilization), and ascribe it at once to the establishment of the Protestant ascendancy, and the succession of the House of Hanover. These great events appear to have given a more popular turn to our literature and genius, as well as to our government. It was found high time that the people should be represented in books as well as in parliament. They wished to see some account of themselves in what they read, and not to be confined always to the vices, the miseries, and frivolities of the great. Our domestic tragedy, and our earliest periodical works, appeared a little before the same period. In despotic countries, human nature is not of sufficient importance to be studied or described. The *canaille* are objects rather of disgust than curiosity, and there are no middle classes. The works of Racine and Molière are little else than imitations of the verbiage of the court, before which they were represented; or fanciful caricatures of the manners of the lowest of the people. But in the period of our history in question, a security of person and property, and a freedom of opinion, had been established, which made every man feel of some consequence to himself, and appear an object of some curiosity to his neighbours; our manners became more domesticated; there was a general spirit of sturdiness and independence, which made the English character more truly English than perhaps at any other period—that is, more tenacious of its own opinions and purposes. The whole surface of society appeared cut out into square enclosures and sharp angles, which extended to the dresses of the time, their gravel walks, and clipped hedges. Each individual had a certain ground-plot of his own to cultivate his particular humours in, and let them shoot out at pleasure; and a most plentiful crop they have produced accordingly.

The reign of George II. was, in a word, in an eminent degree, *the age of hobby-horses*. But since that period, things have taken a different turn. His present Majesty, during almost the whole of his reign, has been constantly mounted on a great War-horse; and has fairly driven all competitors out of the field. Instead of minding our own affairs, or laughing at each other, the eyes of all his faithful subjects have been fixed on the career of the Sovereign, and all hearts anxious for the safety of his person and government. Our pens and our swords have been drawn alike in their defence: and the returns of killed and wounded, the manufacture of newspapers and parliamentary speeches, have exceeded all former example. If we have had little of the blessings of peace, we have had enough of the glories and calamities of war. His Majesty has indeed contrived to keep alive the greatest public interest ever known, by his determined manner of riding his hobby for half a century together, with the aristocracy—the democracy—the clergy—the landed and monied interest—and the rabble, in full cry after him! and at the end of his career, most happily and unexpectedly succeeded—amidst empires lost and won—kingdoms overturned and created—and the destruction of an incredible number of lives—in restoring *the divine right of Kings*,—and thus preventing any future abuse of the example which seated his family on the throne!

It is not to be wondered, if, amidst the tumult of events crowded into this period, our literature has partaken of the disorder of the time; if our prose has run mad, and our poetry grown childish. Among those few *persons* who "have kept the even tenor of their way," the author of Evelina.

Cecilia, and Camilla, holds a distinguished place. Mrs. Radcliffe's "enchantments drear" and mouldering castles, derived a part of their interest, we suppose, from the supposed tottering state of all old structures at the time; and Mrs. Inchbald's "Nature and Art" would not have had the same popularity, but that it fell in (in its two main characters) with the prevailing prejudice of the moment, that judges and bishops were not pure abstractions of justice and piety. Miss Edgeworth's tales, again, are a kind of essence of common sense, which seemed to be called for by the prevailing epidemics of audacious paradox and insane philosophy. The author of the present novel is, however, quite of the old school, a mere common observer of manners,—and also a very woman. It is this last circumstance which forms the peculiarity of her writings, and distinguishes them from those masterpieces which we have before mentioned. She is unquestionably a quick, lively, and accurate observer of persons and things; but she always looks at them with a consciousness of her sex, and in that point of view in which it is the particular business and interest of women to observe them. We thus get a kind of supplement and gloss to our original text, which we could not otherwise have obtained. There is little in her works of passion or character, or even manners, in the most extended sense of the word, as implying the sum-total of our habits and pursuits; her *forte* is in describing the absurdities and affectations of external behaviour, or *the manners of people in company*. Her characters, which are all caricatures, are no doubt distinctly marked, and perfectly kept up; but they are somewhat superficial, and exceedingly uniform. Her heroes and heroines, almost all of them, depend on the stock of a single phrase or sentiment; or atleast have certain mottoes or devices by which they may always be known. They are such characters as people might be supposed to assume for a night at a masquerade. She presents not the whole-length figure, nor even the face, but some prominent feature. In the present novel, for example, a lady appears regularly every ten pages, to get a lesson in music for nothing. She never appears for any other purpose; this is all you know of her; and in this the whole wit and humour of the character consists. Meadows is the same, who has always the same cue of being tired, without any other idea, etc. It has been said of Shakspeare, that you may always assign his speeches to the proper characters:—and you may infallibly do the same thing with Madame D'Arblay's; for they always say the same thing. The Branghtons are the best. Mr. Smith is an exquisite city portrait. Evelina is also her best novel, because it is shortest; that is, it has all the liveliness in the sketches of character, and exquisiteness of comic dialogue and repartee, without the tediousness of the story, and endless affectation of the sentiments.

Women, in general, have a quicker perception of any oddity or singularity of character than men, and are more alive to every absurdity which arises from a violation of the rules of society, or a deviation from established custom. This partly arises from the restraints on their own behaviour, which turn their attention constantly on the subject, and partly from other causes. The surface of their minds, like that of their bodies, seems of a finer texture than ours; more soft, and susceptible of immediate impression. They have less muscular power,—less power of continued voluntary attention,—of reason—passion and imagination; but they are more easily impressed with whatever appeals to their senses or habitual prejudices. The intuitive perception of their minds is less disturbed by any general reasonings on causes or consequences. They learn the idiom of character and manner,

as they acquire that of language, by rote merely, without troubling themselves about the principles. Their observation is not the less accurate on that account, as far as it goes; for it has been well said, that "there is nothing so true as habit."

There is little other power in Miss Burney's novels, than that of immediate observation. Her characters, whether of refinement or vulgarity, are equally superficial and confined. The whole is a question of form, whether that form is adhered to, or violated. It is this circumstance which takes away dignity and interest from her story and sentiments, and makes the one so teasing and tedious, and the other so insipid. The difficulties in which she involves her heroines are indeed "Female Difficulties;"—they are difficulties created out of nothing. The author appears to have no other idea of refinement than that it is the reverse of vulgarity; but the reverse of vulgarity is fastidiousness and affectation. There is a true and false delicacy. Because a vulgar country Miss would answer "yes" to a proposal of marriage in the first page, Madame d'Arblay makes it a proof of an excess of refinement, and an indispensable point of etiquette in her young ladies, to postpone the answer to the end of five volumes, without the smallest reason for their doing so, and with every reason to the contrary. The reader is led every moment to expect a denouement, and is as constantly disappointed on some trifling pretext. The whole artifice of her fable consists in coming to no conclusion. Her ladies stand so upon the order of their going, that they do not go at all. They will not abate an ace of their punctilio in any circumstances, or on any emergency. They would consider it as quite indecorous to run down stairs though the house were in flames, or to move off the pavement though a scaffolding was falling. She has formed to herself an abstract idea of perfection in common behaviour, which is quite as romantic and impracticable as any other idea of the sort; and the consequence has naturally been, that she makes her heroines commit the greatest improprieties and absurdities, in order to avoid the smallest. In contradiction to a maxim in philosophy, they constantly act from the weakest motive, or rather from pure affectation.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.*

We have often been astonished at the quantity of talent—of invention, observation, and knowledge of character, as well as of spirited and graceful composition, that may be found in those works of fiction in our language, which are generally regarded as among the lower productions of our literature,—upon which no great pains is understood to be bestowed, and which are seldom regarded as the titles of a permanent reputation. If Novels, however, are not fated to last as long as Epic poems, they are at least a great deal more popular in their season; and, slight as their structure, and imperfect as their finishing may often be thought in comparison, we have no hesitation in saying, that the better specimens of the art are incomparably more entertaining, and considerably more instructive. The great objection to them, indeed, is, that they are too entertaining—and are so pleasant in

* Tales of My Landlord.—Vol. xxviii. page 193. March, 1817.

the reading, as to be apt to produce a disrelish for other kinds of reading which may be more necessary, and can in no way be made so agreeable. Neither science, nor authentic history, nor political nor professional instruction, can be conveyed in a pleasant tale; and, therefore, all these things are in danger of appearing dull and uninteresting to the votaries of those more seductive sudies. Among the most popular of these popular productions that have appeared in our times, we must rank the works to which we have just alluded; and we do not hesitate to say that they are well entitled to that distinction. They are, indeed, in many respects, very extraordinary performances—though in nothing more extraordinary than in having remained so long unclaimed. There is no name, we think, in our literature, to which they would not add lustre—and lustre, too, of a very enviable kind; for they not only show great talent, but infinite good sense and good-nature,—a more vigorous and wide reaching intellect than is often displayed in novels, and a more powerful fancy, and a deeper sympathy with various passion, than is often combined with strength of understanding.

The author, whoever he is, has a truly graphic and creative power in the invention and delineation of characters—which he sketches with an ease, and colours with a brilliancy, and scatters about with a profusion, which remind us of Shakspeare himself: yet with all this force and felicity in representation of living agents, he has the eye of a poet for all the striking aspects of nature; and usually contrives, both in his scenery, and in the groups with which it is enlivened, to combine the picturesque with the natural, with a grace that has rarely been attained by artists so copious and rapid. His narrative, in this way, is kept constantly full of life, variety, and colour; and is so interspersed with glowing descriptions, and lively allusions, and flying traits of sagacity and pathos, as not only to keep our attention continually awake, but to afford a pleasing exercise to most of our other faculties. The prevailing tone is very gay and pleasant; but the author's most remarkable, and, perhaps, his most delightful talent, is that of representing kindness of heart in union with lightness of spirits and great simplicity of character, and of blending the expression of warm and generous and exalted affections with scenes and persons that are in themselves both lowly and ludicrous. This gift he shares with his illustrious countryman Burns—as he does many of the other qualities we have mentioned with another living poet,—who is only inferior perhaps in that to which we have alluded. It is very honourable, indeed, we think, both to the author, and to the readers among whom he is so extremely popular, that the great interest of his pieces is for the most part a moral interest—that the concern we take in his characters is less on account of their adventures than of their amiableness—and that the great charm of his works is derived from the kindness of heart, the capacity of generous emotions, and the lights of native taste, which he ascribes, so lavishly, and at the same time with such an air of truth and familiarity, even to the humblest of his favourites. With all his relish for the ridiculous, accordingly, there is no tone of misanthropy, or even of sarcasm, in his representations; but, on the contrary, a great indulgence and relenting towards those who are to be the objects of our disapprobation. There is no keen or cold-blooded satire—no bitterness of heart, or fierceness of resentment, in any part of his writings. His love of ridicule is little else than a love of mirth; and savours throughout of the joyous temperament in which it appears to have its origin; while the buoyancy of a raised

and poetical imagination lifts him continually above the region of mere jollity and good humour, to which a taste, by no means nice or fastidious, seems constantly in danger of sinking him. He is evidently a person of a very sociable and liberal spirit—with great habits of observation—who has ranged pretty extensively through the varieties of human life and character, and mingled with them all, not only with intelligent familiarity, but with a free and natural sympathy for all diversity of their tastes, pleasures, and pursuits—one who has kept his heart as well as his eyes open to all that has offered itself to engage them; and learned indulgence for human faults and follies, not only from finding kindred faults in their most intolerant censors, but also for the sake of the virtues by which they are often redeemed, and the sufferings by which they have still oftener been taught. The temper of his writings, in short, is precisely the reverse of those of our Laureates and Lakers, who, being themselves the most whimsical of mortals, make it a conscience to loathe and detest all with whom they happen to disagree, and labour to promote mutual animosity and all manner of uncharitableness among mankind, by referring every supposed error of taste, or peculiarity of opinion, to some hateful corruption of the heart and understanding.

With all the indulgence, however, which we so justly ascribe to him, we are far from complaining of the writer before us for being too neutral and undecided on the great subjects which are most apt to engender excessive zeal and intolerance—and we are almost as far from agreeing with him as to most of these subjects. In politics, it is sufficiently manifest, that he is a decided Tory—and, we are afraid, something of a latitudinarian both in morals and religion: he is very apt, at least, to make a mock of all enthusiasm for liberty or faith—and not only gives a decided preference to the social over the austerer virtues—but seldom expresses any warm or hearty admiration except for those graceful and gentleman-like principles which can generally be acted upon with a gay countenance, and do not imply any great effort of self-denial, or any deep sense of the rights of others, or the helplessness and humility of our common nature. Unless we misconstrue very grossly the indications in these volumes, the author thinks no times so happy as those in which an indulgent monarch awards a reasonable portion of liberty to grateful subjects, who do not call in question his right either to give or to withhold it—in which a dignified and decent hierarchy receives the homage of their submissive and uninquiring flocks—and a gallant nobility redeems the venial immoralities of their gayer hours, by brave and honourable conduct towards each other, and spontaneous kindness to vassals in whom they recognise no independent rights, and not many features of a common nature. It is rather remarkable, however, that, with propensities thus decidedly aristocratical, the ingenious author has succeeded by far the best in the representation of rustic and homely characters;—and not in the ludicrous or contemptuous representation of them—but by making them at once more natural and more interesting than they had ever been made before in any work of fiction; by showing them not as clowns to be laughed at—or wretches to be pitied and despised—but as human creatures, with as many pleasures, and fewer cares than their superiors—with affections not only as strong, but often as delicate as those whose language is smoother—and with a vein of humour, a force of sagacity, and very frequently an elevation of fancy, as high and as natural as can be met with among more cultivated beings. The great merit of all these delineations is their admirable truth and fidelity—the whole manner and cast of the characters being accurately moulded on their

ondition—and the finer attributes that are ascribed to them, so blended and harmonized with the native rudeness and simplicity of their life and occupations, that they are made interesting and even noble beings, without the least particle of foppery or exaggeration, and delight and amuse us, without trespassing at all on the province of pastoral or romance.

Next to these, we think, he has found his happiest subjects, or at least displayed his greatest powers, in the delineation of the grand and gloomy aspects of nature, and of the dark and fierce passions of the heart. The natural gaiety of his temper does not indeed allow him to dwell long on such themes;—but the sketches he occasionally introduces are executed with admirable force and spirit—and give a strong impression both of the vigour of his imagination, and the variety of his talent. It is only in the third rank that we would place his pictures of chivalry and chivalrous character—his traits of gallantry, nobleness, and honour—and that bewitching assemblage of gay and gentle manners, with generosity, candour, and courage, which has long been familiar enough to readers and writers of novels, but has never before been represented with such an air of truth, and so much ease and happiness of execution.

Among his faults and failures, we must give the first place to his descriptions of virtuous young ladies—and his representations of the ordinary business of courtship and conversation in polished life. We admit that those things, as they are commonly conducted, are apt to be a little insipid to a mere critical spectator;—and that while they consequently require more heightening than strange adventures or grotesque persons, they admit less of exaggeration or ambitious ornament; yet we cannot think it necessary that they should be altogether so lame and mawkish as we generally find them in the hands of this spirited writer, whose powers really seem to require some stronger stimulus to bring them into action, than can be supplied by the flat realities of a peaceful and ordinary existence. His love of the ludicrous, it must also be observed, often betrays him into forced and vulgar exaggerations, and into the repetition of common and paltry stories; though it is but fair to add, that he does not detain us long with them, and makes amends, by the copiousness of his assortment, for the indifferent quality of some of the specimens. It is another consequence of this extreme abundance in which he revels and riots, and of the fertility of the imagination from which it is supplied, that he is at all times a little apt to overdo even those things which he does best. His most striking and highly-coloured characters appear rather too often, and go on rather too long. It is astonishing, indeed, with what spirit they are supported, and how fresh and animated they are to the very last;—but still there is something too much of them—and they would be more waited for and welcomed, if they were not quite so lavish of their presence. It was reserved for Shakspeare alone, to leave all his characters as new and unworn as he found them,—and to carry Falstaff through the business of three several plays, and leave us as greedy of his sayings as at the moment of his first introduction. It is no light praise to the author before us, that he has sometimes reminded us of this as well as other inimitable excellences in that most gifted of all inventors.

To complete this hasty and unpremeditated sketch of his general characteristics, we must add, that he is above all things national and Scottish,—and never seems to feel the powers of a giant, except when he touches his native soil. His countrymen alone, therefore, can have a full sense of his merits,

or a perfect relish of his excellences; and those only, indeed, of them, who have mingled, as he has done, pretty freely with the lower orders, and made themselves familiar, not only with their language, but with the habits and traits of character, of which it then only becomes expressive. It is one thing to understand the meaning of words, as they are explained by other words in a glossary or dictionary, and another to know their value, as expressive of certain feelings and humours in the speakers to whom they are native, and as signs both of temper and condition among those who are familiar with their import.

We must content ourselves, we fear, with this hasty and superficial sketch of the general character of this author's performances, in the place of a more detailed examination of those which he has given to the public since we first announced him as the author of Waverley. The time for noticing his two intermediate works has been permitted to go by so far, that it would probably be difficult to recall the public attention to them with any effect; and, at all events, impossible to affect, by any observations of ours, the judgment which has been passed upon them, with very little assistance, we must say, from professed critics, by the mass of their intelligent readers,—to whom, indeed, we have no doubt that they are, by this time, as well known, and as correctly estimated, as if they had been indebted to us for their first impressions on the subject. For our own parts we must confess, that we still look back to Waverley with all the fascination of a first love; and that we cannot help thinking, that the greatness of the public transactions in which that story was involved, as well as the wildness and picturesque graces of its Highland scenery and characters, have invested it with a charm, to which the more familiar attractions of the other pieces have not come up. In this, perhaps, our opinion differs from that of better judges;—but we cannot help suspecting, that the later publications are most admired by many, at least in the Southern part of the island, only because they are more easily and perfectly understood, in consequence of the training which had been gone through in the perusal of the former. But, however that be, we are far enough from denying, that the two succeeding works are performances of extraordinary merit,—and are willing even to admit, that they show quite as much power and genius in the author—though, to our taste at least, the subjects are less happily selected. Dandie Dinmont is, beyond all question, we think, the best rustic portrait that has ever yet been exhibited to the public—the most honourable to rustics, and the most creditable to the heart as well as the genius of the artist—the truest to nature—the most interesting and the most complete in all its lineaments. Meg Merrilees belongs more to the department of poetry: she is most akin to the witches of Macbeth, with some traits of the antient Sibyl engrafted on the coarser stock of a Gipsy of the last century. Though not absolutely in nature, however, she must be allowed to be a very imposing and emphatic personage, and to be mingled, both with the business and the scenery of the piece, with the greatest skill and effect. Pleydell is a harsh caricature; and Dirk Hatteric a vulgar bandit of the German school. The lovers, too, are rather more faultless and more insipid than usual; and all the genteel persons, indeed, not a little fatiguing. Yet there are many passages of great merit, of a gentler and less obtrusive character. The grief of old Ellengowan for the loss of his child, and the picture of his own dotage and death, are very touching and natural; while the many descriptions of the

coast scenery, and of the various localities of the story, are given with a freedom, force, and effect, that bring every feature before our eyes, and impress us with an irresistible conviction of their reality.

The Antiquary is, perhaps, on the whole, less interesting,—though there are touches in it, equal, if not superior, to any thing that occurs in either of the other works. The adventure of the tide and night storm under the cliffs, we do not hesitate to pronounce the very best description we ever met with,—in verse or in prose, in antient or in modern writing. Old Edie is of the family of Meg Merrilees,—a younger brother, we confess, with less terror and energy, and more taste and gaiety, but equally a poetical embellishment of a familar character; and yet resting enough on the great points of nature, to be blended without extravagance in the transactions of beings so perfectly natural and thoroughly alive, that no suspicion can be entertained of their reality. The Antiquary himself is the great blemish of the work,—at least in so far as he is an antiquary;—though we must say for him, that, unlike most oddities, he wearies us most at first; and is so managed, as to turn out both more interesting and more amusing than we had any reason to expect. The low characters in this book are not always worth drawing; but they are exquisitely finished; and prove the extent and accuracy of the author's acquaintance with human life and human nature. The family of the fisherman is an exquisite group throughout; and, at the scene of the funeral, in the highest degree striking and pathetic. Dousterswivel is as wearisome as the genuine Spurzheim himself: and the tragic story of the Lord is, on the whole, a miscarriage, though interspersed with passages of great force and energy. The denouement, which connects it with the active hero of the piece, is altogether forced and unnatural.

The Tales of My Landlord, though they fill four volumes, are, as yet, but two in number; the one being three times as long and ten times as interesting as the other. The introduction, from which the general title is derived, is as foolish and clumsy as may be; and is another instance of that occasional imbecility or self-willed caprice which every now and then leads this author, before he gets afloat on the full stream of his narration, into absurdities which excite the astonishment of the least gifted of his readers. This whole prologue of My Landlord, which is vulgar in the conception, trite and lame in the execution, and utterly out of harmony with the stories to which it is prefixed, should be entirely retrenched in the future editions; and the two novels, which have as little connexion with each other as with this ill-fancied prelude, given separately to the world, each under its own denomination.

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The scene of the story is laid—in Scotland of course—in those disastrous times which immediately preceded the Revolution of 1688; and exhibits a lively picture, both of the general state of manners at that period, and of the conduct and temper and principles of the two great parties in politics and religion that were then engaged in unequal and rancorous hostility. There are no times, certainly, within the reach of authentic history, on which it is more painful to look back—which show a government more base and tyrannical, or a people more helpless and miserable. And though all pictures of the greater passions are full of interest, and a lively representation of strong and enthusiastic emotions never fails to be deeply attractive, the piece would have been too full of distress and humiliation if it had been

chiefly engaged with the course of public events, or the record of public feelings. So sad a subject would not have suited many readers, and the author, we suspect, less than any of them. Accordingly, in this, as in his other works, he has made use of the historical events which came in his way, rather to develop the characters, and bring out the peculiarities of the individuals whose adventures he relates, than for any purpose of political information; and makes us present to the times in which he has placed them, less by his direct notices of the great transactions by which they were distinguished, than by his casual intimations of their effects on private persons, and by the very contrast which their temper and occupations often appear to furnish to the colour of the national story. Nothing, indeed, in this respect is more delusive, or at least more wofully imperfect, than the suggestions of authentic history, as it is generally, or rather universally written; and nothing more exaggerated than the impressions it conveys of the actual state and condition of those who live in its most agitated periods. The great public events of which alone it takes cognisance have but little direct influence upon the body of the people, and do not, in general, form the principal business, or happiness or misery even of those who are in some measure concerned in them. Even in the worst and most disastrous times, in periods of civil war and revolution, and public discord and oppression, a great part of the time of a great part of the people is spent in making love and money—in social amusement or professional industry—in schemes for worldly advancement or personal distinction, just as in periods of general peace and prosperity. Men court and marry very nearly as much in the one season as in the other; and are as merry at weddings and christenings—as gallant at balls and races—as busy in their studies and counting-houses—eat as heartily, in short, and sleep as sound—prattle with their children as pleasantly—and thin their plantations and scold their servants as zealously, as if their contemporaries were not furnishing materials thus abundantly for the tragic muse of history. The quiet under current of life, in short, keeps its deep and steady course in its eternal channels, unaffected, or but slightly disturbed, by the storms that agitate its surface; and while long tracts of time, in the history of every country, seem, to the distant student of its annals, to be darkened over with one thick and oppressive cloud of unbroken misery, the greater part of those who have lived through the whole acts of the tragedy will be found to have enjoyed a fair average share of felicity, and to have been much less affected by the shocking events of their day, than those who know nothing else of it than that such events took place in its course. Few men, in short, are historical characters—and no man is always, or most usually, performing a public part. The actual happiness of every life depends far more on things that regard it exclusively, than on those political occurrences which are the common concern of society; and though nothing lends such an air, both of reality and importance, to a fictitious narrative, as to connect its persons with events in real history, still it is the imaginary individual himself that excites our chief interest throughout, and we care for the national affairs only in so far as they affect him. In one sense, indeed, this is the true end and the best use of history; for as all public events are important only as they ultimately concern individuals, if the individual selected belong to a large and comprehensive class, and the events, and their natural operation on him, be justly represented, we shall be enabled, in following out his *adventures*, to form no bad estimate of their true character and value.

The author before us has done all this, we think, and with admirable talent and effect; and if he has not been quite impartial in the management of his historical persons, has contrived, at any rate, to make them contribute largely to the interest of his acknowledged inventions. His view of the effects of great political contentions on private happiness, is, however, we have no doubt, substantially true; and that chiefly because it is not exaggerated—because he does not confine himself to show how gentle natures may be roused into heroism, or rougher tempers exasperated into rancour, by oppression,—but turns still more willingly to show with what ludicrous absurdity genuine enthusiasm may be debased, how little the gaiety of the lighthearted and thoughtless may be impaired by the spectacle of public calamity, and how, in the midst of national distraction, selfishness will pursue its little game of quiet and cunning speculation, and gentler affections find time to multiply and to meet. It is this, we think, that constitutes the great merit of the work before us. It contains an admirable picture of manners and of characters; and exhibits, we think, with great truth and discrimination, the extent and the variety of the shades which the stormy aspect of the political horizon would be likely to throw on such objects.

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It is a production, undoubtedly, of great talent and originality; and yet we find the rudiments of almost all its characters in the very first of the author's publications. Morton is but another edition of Waverley, taking a bloody part in political contention, without caring much about the cause, and interchanging high offices of generosity with his political opponents. Claverhouse has many of the features of the gallant Fergus. Cuddie Headrigg is a Dandie Dinmont of a lower species; and even the Covenanters and their leaders were shadowed out, though afar off, in the gifted Gilfillan, and mine host of the Candlestick. It is in the picture of these hapless enthusiasts, undoubtedly, that the great merit and the great interest of the work consists. That interest, indeed, is so great, that we perceive it has even given rise to a sort of controversy among the admirers and contemners of those antient worthies. It is a singular honour, no doubt, to a work of fiction and amusement, to be thus made the theme of serious attack and defence upon points of historical and theological discussion, and to have grave dissertations written by learned contemporaries upon the accuracy of its representations of public events and characters, or the moral effects of the style of ridicule in which it indulges. It is difficult for us, we confess, to view the matter in so serious a light; nor do we feel much disposed, even if we had leisure for the task, to venture ourselves into the array of the disputants. One word or two, however, we shall say, before concluding, upon the two great points of difference. First, as to the author's profanity in making scriptural expressions ridiculous, by the misuse of them he has ascribed to the fanatics; and, secondly, as to the fairness of his general representation of the conduct and character of the insurgent party and their opponents.

As to the first, we do not know very well what to say. Undoubtedly, all jocular use of Scripture phraseology is in some measure indecent and profane: yet we do not know in what other way those hypocritical pretences to extraordinary sanctity, which generally disguise themselves in such a garb, can be so effectually exposed. And even where the ludicrous misapplication of holy writ arises from mere ignorance, or the foolish mi-

micry of more learned discourscrs, as it is impossible to avoid smiling at the folly when it actually occurs, it is difficult for witty and humorous writers, in whose way it lies, to resist fabricating it for the purpose of exciting smiles. In so far as practice can afford any justification of such a proceeding, we conceive that its justification would be easy. In all our jest-books and plays and works of humour, for two centuries back, the character of Quakers and Puritans and Methodists have been constantly introduced as fit objects of ridicule, on this very account. Swift is full of jokes of this description; and the pious and correct Addison himself is not a little fond of a witty application of a text from the sacred writings. When an author, whose aim was amusement, had to do with a set of people, all of whom dealt in familiar applications of Bible phrases and Old Testament adventures, and who, undoubtedly, very often made very absurd and ridiculous applications of them, it would be rather hard, we think, to interdict him entirely from the representation of these absurdities, or to put in force, for him alone, those statutes against profaneness, which other people have been allowed to transgress, in their hours of gaiety, without censure or punishment.

On the other point, also, we rather lean to the side of the author. He is a Tory, we think, pretty plainly in principle, and scarcely disguises his preference for a Cavalier over a Puritan: but, with these propensities, we think he has dealt pretty fairly with both sides, especially when it is considered that, though he lays his scene in a known crisis of his national history, his work is professedly a work of fiction, and cannot well be accused of misleading any one as to matters of fact. He might have made Claverhouse victorious at Drumclog, if he had thought fit—and nobody could have found fault with him. The insurgent Presbyterians of 1666, and the subsequent years, were, beyond all question, a pious, brave, and conscientious race of men — to whom, and to whose efforts and sufferings, their descendants are deeply indebted for the liberty, both civil and religious, which they enjoy, as well as for the spirit of resistance to tyranny which, we trust, they have inherited along with them. Considered generally as a party, it is impossible that they should ever be remembered, at least in Scotland, but with gratitude and veneration—that their sufferings should ever be mentioned but with deep resentment and horror—or their heroism, both active and passive, but with pride and exultation. At the same time, it is impossible to deny, that there were among them many absurd and ridiculous persons—and some of a savage and ferocious character—old women, in short, like Mause Headrigg—preachers like Kettledrummle—or desperadoes like Balfour of Burley. That a Tory novelist should bring such characters prominently forward, in a tale of the times, appears to us not only to be quite natural, but really to be less blameable than almost any other way in which party feelings could be shown. But even he has not represented the bulk of the party as falling under this description, or as fairly represented by such personages. He has made his hero—who of course possesses all possible virtues—of that persuasion; and has allowed them, in general, the courage of martyrs, the self-denial of hermits, and the zeal and sincerity of apostles. His representation is almost avowedly that of one who is not of their communion; and yet we think it impossible to peruse it, without feeling the greatest respect and pity for those to whom it is applied. A zealous Presbyterian might no doubt have said more in their favour, without violating, or even con-

zealing, the truth; but while zealous Presbyterians will not write entertaining novels themselves, they cannot expect to be treated in them with the same favour as if that had been the character of their authors.

With regard to the author's picture of their opponents, we must say that, with the exception of Claverhouse himself, whom he has invested gratuitously with many graces and liberalities to which we are persuaded he has no title, and for whom, indeed, he has a foolish fondness, with which it would be absurd to deal seriously—he has shown no signs of a partiality that can be blamed, nor exhibited many traits in them with which their enemies have reason to quarrel. If any person can read his strong and lively pictures of military insolence and oppression, without feeling his blood boil within him, we must conclude the fault to be in his own apathy, and not in any softenings of the partial author: nor do we know any Whig writer who has exhibited the baseness and cruelty of that wretched government in more naked and revolting deformity, than in his scene of the torture at the Privy Council. The military executions of Claverhouse himself are admitted without palliation; and the bloodthirstiness of Dalzell, and the brutality of Lauderdale, are represented in their true colours. In short, if this author has been somewhat severe upon the Covenanters, neither has he spared their oppressors; and the truth probably is, that, never dreaming of being made responsible for historical accuracy or fairness in a composition of this description, he has exaggerated a little on both sides, for the sake of effect—and been carried, by the bent of his humour, most frequently to exaggerate on that which afforded the greatest scope for ridicule.*

BOCCACCIO.†

In tracing the progress by which the art of fictitious narrative has advanced from its rude origin to its perfection, we are struck, amidst all the diversities occasioned by government, climate, and education, with the singular coincidence of certain phenomena attending its different stages, which have given a kind of uniformity to its history in all ages and countries of the world.

The infancy of fiction, for example, is everywhere characterized by a superabundance of incident. Attention is kept awake by rapidity of succession; and the beauty or propriety of individual occurrences, or their relation to each other, is forgotten in the bustle and excitement produced by the train. If there exist a principle of selection at all, it seems to be in favour of what is most wild and improbable. Every thing is viewed by the Novelist through a veil of mystery, for so the face of nature was actually regarded by those to whom he addresses himself. Ignorant of the laws that

* Since the publication of the *Fortunes of Nigel*, no notice of Sir Walter Scott's Novels has appeared in the Edinburgh Review. See Vol. xxiv. page 208. Vol. xxix. page 403. Vol. xxxiii. page 1. Vol. xxxvii. page 204. The tales of Galt, Wilson, and Lockhart are reviewed in Vol. xxxix. page 158.

† The Italian Novelists, selected from the most approved Authors in that Language, from the earliest period down to the close of the eighteenth century, arranged in an Historical and Chronological Series. Translated from the Original Italian, accompanied with Notes, Critical and Biographical. By Thomas Roscoe. 4 vols. 8vo. London, 1825.—Vol. xlii. page 173. April, 1825.

regulate the course of the material world, and by which he is afterwards enabled almost to control its movements, man at first regards himself as an inferior being in the chain of existences by which he believes himself surrounded. He humbles himself before the objects of his terror; he endows the elements with will and intelligence; peoples the rocks, mountains, and streams with imaginary beings, to whom he ascribes powers surpassing his own, and, like Tancred in the Enchanted Forest, sees a nymph or a spirit issuing from every tree. The narrator, with an "untaught innate philosophy," avails himself of these feelings; and trusting little to the delineation of familiar occurrences, endeavours to excite and sustain attention by touching the master-key of mysterious terror;—by the tales of mythology, the legends of superstition, the detail of those strange phenomena which at times disturb the course of nature, or of those dark and fearful moral calamities which, suppressing the common powers of thought and action, seem to render man a helpless instrument in the hands of an overpowering and irresistible destiny.

As society advances, however, this mode of interesting passes away. Feeling emerges with the increase of intelligence, as warmth follows the dawn. The mind, "touched to finer issues," is acted on by gentler stimuli. The tales which formerly fettered the reason, are now addressed only to the imagination, and gradually sink into nursery legends. The influence of female society appears more visible, in the less revolting character of the *matériel* of fiction, and in the increasing tendency to the representation of the affairs of actual and domestic life, to which it has communicated so many varied aspects and new attractions. The aim of merely exciting attention by a multitude of incidents, is exchanged for that of touching the feelings, which is found to be more effectually accomplished by a few. The novelist abandons the character of a chronicler or annalist;—he exercises a principle of selection, passes over or details events according to their importance, and their relation to the end he has in view; and in supplying his imaginary actors with motives, language, and sentiments suited to the scenes in which they are placed, he invents and delineates ***character***.

There is still another stage in the progress of fiction. When knowledge and intelligence have been diffused over the whole surface of society; when life becomes daily more uniform, decorous, and conventional,—less subject to strange interruptions—less animated by enthusiasm; when men, amply furnished with materials for contemplation, and little solicited by external objects that lead to emotion, desire rather the repose of thought than the stir of action or of feeling; and, in the representation of the things of life, are occupied more with the springs and motives, the hopes or fears which lead to action, than with action itself; then a corresponding character is impressed on fictitious writing. Plots become simple and domestic to excess; the place of incident is supplied by wit, by sentiment, by eloquence, by argument, by metaphysical analysis; and novels, no longer intended merely to amuse, are made the vehicle of communicating dogmata, moral, political. religious, or philosophical, as the author's peculiar vein may incline.

Of course these several stages of fiction do not really stand quite separate and apart. Each rises out of its predecessor, and subsides into the next by degrees; by the gradual dimness and disappearance of some features, the gradual increase and clearness of others; but still, through all the phases which it exhibits, the progress seems to be from the marvellous to the *extreme* of simplicity, and from a profusion to a penury of incident.

The vast mass of novels which Mr. Roscoe has opened up to the English reader, by these interesting specimens, seems to connect the two first periods, and to have originated in that peculiar state of society in Italy, when knowledge had dispelled, in some degree, among the higher classes, the rude ignorance which is the parent of superstitious wonder, but while all the wild and fierce passions of a barbarous age were still abroad, filling Italy with blood and crime, and habituating its inhabitants to scenes of horror and licentiousness. Even in the earliest of the Italian novels, the supernatural machinery which characterizes the rudest efforts of fiction has disappeared. We perceive traces of a national mind which has already made some progress in knowledge, but none in social refinement—which has escaped from the trammels and terrors of superstition, but is still struggling with that coarseness of feeling and rudeness of taste, which has been induced by centuries of feudal warfare yet unextinguished. We meet with something of the old leaven of a darker era, in the atrocious and revolting character of many of the incidents, the apparent want of confidence in the delineation of gentler feelings, the coarseness of all that is meant for humour, the absence of character, and the principle of resting the interest and effect of the tale, rather on a number of incidents slightly touched, than on a few more strongly drawn and more richly and carefully coloured.

And singular as it may at first appear, this character, which distinguishes the earlier of the Italian ***novelle,*** is applicable, with little variation, to the whole series, from Boccaccio down to Gozzi and Gironi; the changes which might have been expected in the course of five centuries having, in fact, been arrested, partly by the stationary and unchanging nature of the national character, but still more by the peculiar views with which most of the imitators of Boccaccio (and what Italian novelist is not confessedly so?) appear to have written. Boccaccio, by creating and fixing the prose style of his country, had consecrated even the defects of the Decameron, and for ever given the tone to the Italian novel. Thenceforward he stood, as it were, between nature and his literary posterity; intercepting by his gigantic form the light which she shed, and attracting all eyes to himself as the source of inspiration. The tales of his imitators, too, seem all to be composed, less with the view of exciting interest by the narratives themselves, which they borrowed or imitated without ceremony, than in the hope of emulating or surpassing that Tuscan elegance of style, in which he had embalmed so many trifling and worthless legends. The incidents they really seem to have regarded merely as the vehicles of fine writing—as slight themes which were to be adorned with all the brilliant variations of which the music of Italian speech was susceptible. Of what consequence was it to an Italian that his tales were indecent, provided his Tuscan was pure?—that his incidents were borrowed, provided he was master of those flowers of Florentine low life which delighted the classic ears of the Della Crusca Academy? —that his novels were dull and foolish, provided they were told in the most approved language of the "***Conciosiacosache***" school? The glory they aspired to, in fact, was that of writing elegantly,—not that of writing to the imagination or the heart. And this, while it explains that stationary character which, in our opinion, pervades the "long file" of Italian novels, accounts also for that sovereign unconcern and easy impudence with which each appears to have borrowed the matter of his tales from his predecessors, altering merely names and dates, or slightly varying some minor incidents; a system which, though in other countries it would have been fatal to the

reputation of an author, never seems to have weighed much with the Italian critics in their estimates of literary merit.

This general uniformity of manner, though of course it renders the Italian novelists rather a monotonous and wearisome study to those who make a point of going through them as a matter of historical inquiry, has its advantages for the lazy general reader, who is thus enabled, with much ease and sufficient accuracy, to appreciate the whole character of Italian fiction, from the examination of almost any one individual author of the series: and indeed the whole question of the originality, the peculiarities, the merits, and defects of these tales cannot, we think, be viewed with more advantage than in connexion with the first and greatest name on the list,—the Decameron of Boccaccio.

It is almost unnecessary, we presume, to inform our readers, that this work is a collection of a hundred tales, supposed to be told by a party consisting of seven ladies and three gentlemen, assembled at a villa, or rather two villas, near Florence (the site of which has sadly puzzled the Italian commentators), to which they had retired from the memorable pestilence which desolated that city in 1348. The tales are supposed to occupy ten days in narration, each member of the party relating ten tales, and presiding in turn over the amusements of the day.

The description of the pestilence, which forms the introduction to the novels, is imitated in its general outline from Thucydides, but filled up with a terrible minuteness of detail, which shows the narrator's personal acquaintance with the miseries of which he is the historian. The pathological accuracy with which the rise and spreading of the disease is described; the gloomy despair, and still more fearful riot and jollity which pervade the town; the numerous and anxious plans adopted by the citizens for their safety—all different, yet all leading to the same fatal result; the universal selfishness and corruption of morals which it produced,—are described with a solemn and stately precision, varied occasionally by passages of impassioned eloquence, and a judicious selection of individual incidents, which leave a deep impression of horror upon the mind. Such is the picture of the cattle going out at dawn and returning to their stalls at evening "quasi come razionali,"—after the death of the herdsmen,—which strikes the imagination with a sense of loneliness and desolation, like that produced by the solitary figure in the midst of a street of palaces, in one of Poussin's delineations of the plague.*

When all this machinery of disease and terror has been exhausted, the scene suddenly changes. Florence and the pestilence are shut out, and we find ourselves in the circle of the fugitive party in the embowering shades of the Poggio Gherardi; where, "seated on the long green grass, where the sun could not enter, beside the cooling murmur of a fountain, and fanned by a soft breeze," we prepare to listen to the tales of the first day. From this moment all is gaiety among the fugitives; like Lot's family, they "look not back on the city" they had left but two short miles (due piccole miglie) behind them. The miseries of Florence, the loss of friends already dead, and uncertain fate of those who were still alive, are forgotten in the gay round of "Novelle," "Canzioni," and "Ballate," which fill up the hours in this delicious retreat. And thus has Boccaccio beautifully illustrated

* The story of the Death of the Hogs, looks a little apocryphal; but at all events, the blame does not lie with Boccaccio, for he has copied the incident very literally from the contemporary *chronicle of Giovanni Morelli*. page 280.

hat anomaly of the human mind, which, in seasons of strange calamity, eads it to indulge a reckless gaiety in the midst of all that is calculated to nspire the profoundest sorrow, and to cling to life with a more desperate spirit of enjoyment, the nearer it seems to hasten to its close. Let us eat and drink, said the Florentines, for to-morrow we die!

The idea of thus enclosing his Tales in a frame-work, so as to give a kind of unity to the whole, though it had not yet been adopted by any author, either in France or Italy, (the Fabliaux and the Novellino having been the work of numerous hands), was by no means the invention of Boccaccio. In the East, the great fountain from which the fictions of modern Europe were at that time derived, the plan was well known; and there, with the characteristic fondness of the Orientals for parabolic instructions, the Tales are generally represented as related for the purpose of conveying some important moral lesson, or effecting some great end of domestic or state policy. In the Dolopathos, of which it is supposed Boccaccio possessed a manuscript copy, and the general outline of which will be familiar to English readers, from the imitation under the title of Turkish Tales, the story which forms the connecting link of the rest, is that of a young prince, who, resisting the guilty love of one of his father's queens, is accused by her to his father of the very crime he had refused to commit;—in short, an Oriental version of the Phædra and Hippolitus. The father hesitates, however, about condemning his son to death, and the queen relates a tale, the object of which is to overcome his irresolution. This is met by a counter tale on the part of the young prince's tutors, to show the danger of rash measures. The queen replies in a third—and so on, till the invention of the author is exhausted. This was sufficiently absurd; and Boccaccio, while he saw the advantage of connecting his tales, judiciously abandoned the idea of rendering them subservient to any higher purpose than that of amusing the party among whom they are told.

The invention to which he had recourse was certainly extremely beautiful. We cannot agree with Warton that the frame-work of the Canterbury Tales is in its general design superior to that of the Decameron. For though, as Mr. Dunlop has remarked, Chaucer's plan of a pilgrimage has this advantage, that the subject has thus a natural limitation, while Boccaccio's has no other limit but the imagination of the author, the design of the former seems to us to be liable to a more formidable objection—that tales told on horseback to a party of twenty-nine persons could never have been heard by them all. Perhaps of all modes of introducing a series of tales, none affords such advantages as that of placing the scene at sea, and supposing the tales related to dissipate the ennui of a voyage. And indeed it appears to us rather singular that so natural and obvious a plan should have so seldom been employed,—none of the Italian novelists having adopted it before Cintio, who supposes, that on the Sack of Rome by the Constable of Bourbon, ten ladies and gentlemen sailed for Marseilles, and, during the voyage, related the Tales of Hecatommithi for their amusement.* The extent of these "entretiens des voyageurs sur la mer" is thus limited by the voyage, in the same manner as by Chaucer's idea of a pilgrimage; while the party are enabled to narrate or to listen, with the same convenience as among the shady walks and marble fountains of the Villa Palimieri.

In appreciating the inventive powers of Boccaccio from the tales to which

* The novels of Bisaccioni (a writer of the 17th century) are also supposed to be narrated "sopra una nave, mentre questa era vicina per entrare in porto."

this powerful introduction forms the prelude, our readers are probably aware that much difference of opinion prevails among Italian critics. While some are anxious to increase still farther the glory of the "Tuscan artist," by denying his obligations to his predecessors, others have been equally solicitous to display their own critical acumen and research, by converting every trifling resemblance into a plagiarism. Perhaps the strangest whim is that of the learned Manni, who, with the professed view of exalting the literary glory of Boccaccio, endeavours to prove, in an amusing but most inconclusive quarto, that every one of Boccaccio's novels is founded on some popular tale then current in Italy, or on the historical events of the time.* It is not our intention to enter on the details of this *quæstio vexata*, which has already been done in a way that admits of no improvement, by Mr. Dunlop in his admirable History of Fiction; but we may state generally what appears to us to be the result of a careful comparison of the Decameron with the works of the ruder novelists who preceded its illustrious author.

The sources which are commonly supposed to have furnished the greater part of his materials, are the various collections of Oriental Tales which were then current in Italy; the Gesta Romanorum, the old collection entitled the Novellino or Cento Novelle Antiche, and the Fabliaux. His obligations to these works, however, must be very differently proportioned.

The mass of Arabian fiction, as far as we are acquainted with it, seems to arrange itself in three classes: those supernatural tales, the brilliant machinery of which has influenced so strongly the imaginative literature of Europe; tales of domestic and comic adventure often singularly ingenious in their structure, and of which the events are produced merely by human agency; and those apologues or parables, in which the incidents are typical of some deeper and mystical meaning. Each class seems to have found its own admirers when the influence of Oriental fiction began to be felt in Europe. The supernatural world of Arabian fiction was transferred to the longer and more elaborate romances of chivalry;—the moral and mystical fictions were appropriated by the monks, and incorporated with the lives of saints and martyrs;—while the world of common life, with its lively pictures of gallantry and ingenious knavery, was congenial to the more worldly and unspiritualized character of the Trouvères, and was imitated by them without ceremony in the Fabliaux.

With what may be considered the higher or epic class of Arabian fable, Boccaccio has no connexion. He had no relish for the marvellous, and no taste for the employment of supernatural machinery. The Moral Apologues of the East had been collected principally in the Clericalis Disciplina of Alphonsus, and in the Gesta Romanorum; and from these, as well as from the old collection in the Novellino, which blends the orientalism of the Gesta with the fables of Chivalry, and with the historical incidents of the time, Boccaccio has certainly adopted several tales, and many particular in-

* Not content with giving a local habitation and a name to the events and characters of the Tales, Manni will have it that Boccaccio's party did actually meet just as described in the Decameron, and he thus gravely adverts to the difficulties of the subject:—"Non intendo io però come l'adunanza descritta, composta in gran parte di femminili persone, avesse potuto agevolmente dilungarsi da Firenze a piedi, per giugnere alla villa di S. Anna presso Prato, e come agevole fosse stato loro altresì in tempo di grande infezione passare liberamente da più luoghi guardati e custoditi, a cagione della medesima pestilenza, quanti e credibile che se ne trovassero in sì lungo tratto," and therefore he is inclined to bring the scene of action nearer Florence.

cidents. But in almost every case he has done so with so many improvements, and has so finely varied the incidents, filled up a meagre outline, retrenched the absurdities of the original, improved the dialogues (which are rare), and clothed the whole with so rich a colouring of style, that, in every thing which renders invention valuable, he may be said to have invented them. He has appropriated them to himself, as La Fontaine afterwards did the tales of the Decameron, by giving them a new character; he found them of brick, and he left them of marble.

The other great branch of Arabian fiction is more intimately connected with the spirit of the Decameron, though the influence which we trace was probably only of a mediate nature. The numerous tales of common life, in which the imagination of the Arabian fabulists,—rarely, if ever, exerted in the delineation of character, and painting men only in masses, and through the medium of professions,—had exhausted itself in the invention of adventures of a comic nature, in the contrivance of *imbroglios* and mistakes, in the artful arrangement of a chain of incidents, of which the extremes would often appear the most remote and improbable, were they not so happily united by the intermediate links, that the reader almost feels that any other termination would be out of place;—these tales had met with congenial admirers among the Trouvères. Too much men of the world to indulge in visions of marvel and romance, they adopted the humbler manner of the Arabian fabulists, applied it to the circumstances of their own age, and gave birth to a multitude of tales of intrigue and knavery, and sometimes of gallantry and chivalrous devotion. Among these the comic preponderates; but in the few specimens of a more serious kind which they have left, they have displayed powers of no ordinary kind. The tale of Aucassin and Nicolette,* is, in ingenuity and beauty of incident, fully equal to any in the Decameron. In the comic or serio-comic class, none of Boccaccio's equal the frequently imitated tale of Les Trois Bossus, or the graceful levity of Le Manteau mal taillé. In fact, the advantages they possessed enabled them to paint with peculiar force, truth, and vivacity. Men, in general of acute and vigorous mind, though destitute of learning, and too often of principle; welcome guests in all society from their powers of amusing, but respected in none; experiencing every extreme of life, and apparently at home in all; sometimes dispelling the ennui of baronial castles; at others courting the society of humble vassals; and, wandering on the earth without any thing to attach them to their kind;—they had the amplest opportunity of observing accurately, and painting impartially the changes of manycoloured life; and, if neither their ability nor their inclination prompted them to invent new worlds, they may fairly be said to have exhausted that of French manners in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It is from these light and joyous compositions, and not from the *plat* and heavy annalists of the time, that we derive the best knowledge we possess of the state of society at that period. "A straw thrown up into the air," says the learned Selden, "will show how the wind sits, which cannot be learned by casting up a stone."

The style of the Fabliaux, too, though frequently disgustingly coarse, has in its general character a lightness and buoyancy, a tinge of naïve humour and vivacity, which breathes of the sunny skies and vine-covered hills of France; and which was singularly congenial to the mind of Boccaccio, accustomed to look on life in its brighter aspects, and, even in his tragic

* This tale is translated in Way's Fabliaux, and has been very ingeniously converted by Madame Murat into a Fairy Tale, under the title of Etoilette, in the Lutins de Kernosy.

tales, indulging only a pleasing and tempered melancholy. Accordingly, it can hardly be doubted, that much of the general manner of the Decameron, so different from the unbending pomp of the Fiammetta and Filocopo, has been borrowed from the Fabliaux, though it appears there modified in such a manner as we should expect, by a union with classical recollections, and the more diffuse and turgid style of the romances of chivalry. It is in this view, then, rather as having copied *the manner* of the Trouvères, than as being indebted to them for particular tales, that Boccaccio is really an imitator. It is true we are in possession only of a small part of S. Palaye's vast collection; but out of a hundred and fifty-six specimens given by Le Grand, not more than six appear to us to have been directly borrowed by Boccaccio.

After all, then, a vast number remain to which he has an undoubted claim; and, what is of more importance, these are the best in the book. No lynx-eyed critic has yet deprived him of the invention of the Falcon,—the simplest, the least laboured, yet the most touching of all his tales;—of the deeply pathetic story of Girolamo and Salvestra—the tale of the Lovers poisoned amidst their holiday rejoicings by the laurel leaf—the Pot of Basil—Sigismunda and Guiscardo—the happy illustration of the power of love contained in Cymon and Iphigenia—each perfect in its own class, and unequalled in the range of Italian novels. As a proof, too, how totally different are the imitations of Boccaccio from the rude originals on which they are founded, perhaps no fairer illustration could be selected than the well-known tale of Titus and Gisippus (8th Giorn. 10.), which will be familiar to the English reader in the Alcander and Septimius of Goldsmith. The main idea of the story may be found in three writers before Boccaccio. It occurs in the Clericalis Disciplina of Alphonsus, in the Gesta Romanorum (Nov. 171.), and in the Collection of Le Grand, under the title of Les Deux Bons Amis. But all the better and more interesting parts of the tale are Boccaccio's; who has adorned the whole with a brilliancy of colouring which renders this legend, in the opinion of Italian critics, the most eloquent in the Decameron, or perhaps in the Italian language.

And this brings us to the style of the Decameron, in which, whatever may be thought of his incidents, Boccaccio's claims to originality are undoubted. And when we reflect what powers of mind were necessary to evolve order and beauty from the chaos of the Romanzo dialect, as it then existed, without models and without assistance,—and to frame a narrative style, which is at this day the standard to which the most eloquent of his countrymen are proud to conform, we may doubt whether the task does not demand a higher reach of intellect and imagination than any arrangement of incidents, however new and ingenious. Whether that style is the best adapted for the purpose of narrative, is another question. It is certainly the very perfection of elaborate musical writing,—flowing on like a copious river, confined by no narrow banks, broken by no precipices, and filling the ear and soothing the mind with a soft and ever-varying murmur. Perhaps this extreme sweetness becomes at last wearisome, and we long for some interruption of this melodious current,—some cessation of this stream of language,

> "Which runs, and as it runs, for ever would run on."

Undoubtedly the style of the Decameron is too musical and diffuse. The most tragic and the most comic events, description, narrative, and dialogue, are *all given* with the same plethoric fulness, the same "solemn loquacious-

ness" * of expression, which has since tinged the whole literature of Italy. But though objectionable as a whole, it is peculiarly calculated to produce an effect in tales of a quiet and pensive cast; and the recollection of some particular passages of melancholy beauty which we have long ago read, must often recur, we think, to the mind of every one who is not insensible to the pathos of sound.

To us the great charm of the Decameron consists, not so much in the effect of particular tales, as in the peculiarly happy manner in which the vast and varied materials it contains have been arranged, so that each occupies its proper share of importance and attention. The great aim of Boccaccio seems to have been to avoid all exaggeration, to render nothing too prominent or engrossing, to exhibit sketches rather than pictures of life. The spirit of the middle ages rises indeed before us, but its form is misty and dim. The actors of his Dramas—the petty princes and rude nobles of Italy, monks, nuns, pilgrims, merchants, usurers, robbers, and peasants—pass before us as in a brilliant but rapid procession, where the eye has no time to pause on individuals, and the mind retains little beyond the impression, that a stately and imposing pageant has gone by. The moving picture of the Decameron is purposely painted in a calm and subdued tone, with no strong lights or deep shadows, but tinged all over with a soft glow of kindly feeling, and breathing the very spirit of serenity and repose. Nothing is glaring, nothing oppressive: pathos and humour, incident and description, activity and repose succeed each other as in the drama of life, none engrossing attention, none excluding another, but all blending in tempered harmony. The vast range of Boccaccio's mind, which prevented any exclusive devotion to one class of feelings, is imaged forth in the infinite variety of the Decameron; and the admirably balanced union of powers which he possessed, in the profound art with which its discordant materials are reduced to a consistent whole.

In fact, when we begin to analyze more minutely the features of Boccaccio's mind, it will at once be seen that his strength lay in their union. Character painting was not the mode of the age; and Boccaccio was even less gifted in this respect than his contemporary, our own Chaucer, as the least comparison of the personages of the Canterbury Tales with those in the Decameron, will evince. Boccaccio's are distinguished merely by station or sex; each of Chaucer's is marked by such characteristic traits, that he cannot possibly be confounded with his companion. "I know them all," says Dryden, "as well as if I had supped with them." Chaucer painted by minute touches, by the observance of small traits of character, and even of language. Boccaccio saw only the broader shades of distinction, and painted what he saw. In the same way, his pathos, though pleasing, is rarely deep. It seldom agitates the mind with any strong emotion, or leaves any other impression on the memory but that of a vague softness. His humour we cannot help thinking exceedingly indifferent; and, indeed, this remark applies to the whole series of Italian Novels, nothing being, in general, more melancholy than their wit, or more forced than their humour. Coarse allusions to personal defects, and practical jokes, are the wit of a rude age; true wit and ingenious pleasantry is the production of a very advanced state of civilization; and Boccaccio only reflected, in this particular, the manners of his times. Neither do we think that his

* "Feierliche geschwätzigkeit." Bouterwek.

powers of description, though considerable, are of the highest order. Except in the gloomy portrait of the plague, and in some few of the rural descriptions which preface or conclude the tales of each day, there is little that can be called forcible or defined. The vivacity and clearness of the idea seem always to be sacrificed to the elaborate polish of the style.

GODWIN.*

We find little of the author of Caleb Williams in the present work, except the name in the title-page. Either we are changed, or Mr. Godwin is changed, since he wrote that masterly performance. We remember the first time of reading it well, though now long ago. In addition to the singularity and surprise occasioned by seeing a romance written by a philosopher and politician, what a quickening of the pulse,—what an interest in the progress of the story,—what an eager curiosity in divining the future,—what an individuality and contrast in the characters,—what an elevation and what a fall was that of Falkland;—how we felt for his blighted hopes, his remorse, and despair, and took part with Caleb Williams as his ordinary and unformed sentiments are brought out, and rendered more and more acute by the force of circumstances, till hurried on by an increasing and uncontrollable impulse, he turns upon his proud benefactor and unrelenting persecutor, and in a mortal struggle overthrows him on the vantage-ground of humanity and justice! There is not a moment's pause in the action or sentiments: the breath is suspended, the faculties wound up to the highest pitch, as we read. Page after page is greedily devoured. There is no laying down the book till we come to the end; and even then the words still ring in our ears, nor do the mental apparitions ever pass away from the eye of memory. Few books have made a greater impression than Caleb Williams on its first appearance. It was read, admired, parodied, dramatised. All parties joined in its praise. Those (not a few) who at the time favoured Mr. Godwin's political principles, hailed it as a new triumph of his powers, and as a proof that the stoicism of the doctrines he inculcated did not arise from any defect of warmth or enthusiasm of feeling, and that his abstract speculations were grounded in, and sanctioned by, an intimate knowledge of, and rare felicity in, developing the actual vicissitudes of human life. On the other hand, his enemies, or those who looked with a mixture of dislike and fear at the system of ethics advanced in the *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*, were disposed to forgive the author's paradoxes for the truth of imitation with which he had depicted prevailing passions, and were glad to have something in which they could sympathize with a man of no mean capacity or attainments. At any rate, it was a new and startling event in literary history for a metaphysician to write a popular romance. The thing took, as all displays of unforeseen talent do with the public. Mr. Godwin was thought a man of very powerful and versatile genius; and in him the understanding and the imagination reflected a mutual and dazzling light upon each other. His St. Leon did not lessen the wonder, nor the public admiration of him, or rather "seemed like another

* Cloudesley, a Tale; by the Author of Caleb Williams.—Vol. ii. page 144. April, 1830.

morn risen on mid-noon." But from that time he has done nothing of superlative merit. He has imitated himself, and not well. He has changed the glittering spear, which always detected truth or novelty, for a leaden foil. We cannot say of his last work (Cloudesley),—"Even in his ashes live his wonted fires." The story is cast indeed something in the same moulds as Caleb Williams; but they are not filled and running over with molten passion, or with scalding tears. The situations and characters, though forced and extreme, are without effect from the want of juxtaposition and collision. Cloudesley (the elder) is like Caleb Williams, a person of low origin, and rebels against his patron and employer; but he remains a characterless, passive, inefficient agent to the last,—forming his plans and resolutions at a distance,—not whirled from expedient to expedient, nor driven from one sleepless hiding-place to another; and his lordly and conscience-stricken accomplice (Danvers) keeps his state in like manner, brooding over his guilt and remorse in solitude, with scarce an object or effort to vary the round of his reflections,—a lengthened paraphrase of grief. The only dramatic incidents in the course of the narrative are, the sudden metamorphosis of the Florentine Count Camaldoli into the robber St. Elmo, and the unexpected and opportune arrival of Lord Danvers in person, with a coach-and-four and liveries, at Naples, just in time to save his ill-treated nephew from a violent death. The rest is a well-written essay, or theme, composed as an exercise to gain a mastery of style and topics.

There is, indeed, no falling off in point of style or command of language in the work before us. Cloudesley is better written than Caleb Williams. The expression is everywhere terse, vigorous, elegant;—a polished mirror without a wrinkle. But the spirit of the execution is lost in the inertness of the subject-matter. There is a dearth of invention, a want of character and grouping. There are clouds of reflections without any new occasion to call them forth:—an expanded flow of words without a single pointed remark. A want of acuteness and originality is not a fault that is generally chargeable upon our author's writings. Nor do we lay the blame upon him now, but upon circumstances. Had Mr. Godwin been bred a monk, and lived in the good old times, he would assuredly either have been burnt as a free-thinker, or have been rewarded with a mitre, for a tenth part of the learning and talent he has displayed. He might have reposed on a rich benefice, and the reputation he had earned, enjoying the *otium cum dignitate*, or at most relieving his official cares by revising successive editions of his former productions, and enshrining them in cases of sandal-wood and crimson velvet in some cloistered hall or princely library. He might then have courted

> ——— "retired leisure,
> That in trim gardens takes its pleasure,"—

have seen his peaches ripen in the sun; and smiling secure on fortune and on fame, have repeated with complacency the motto—*Horas non numero nisi serenas!* But an author by profession knows nothing of all this. His is only "the iron rod, the torturing hour." He lies "stretched upon the rack of restless ecstasy:" he runs the everlasting gauntlet of public opinion. He must write on, and if he had the strength of Hercules and the wit of Mercury, he must in the end write himself down.

> "And like a gallant horse, fall'n in first rank,
> Lies there for pavement to the abject rear,
> O'er-run and trampled on."

He cannot let well done alone. He cannot take his stand on what he has already achieved, and say, Let it be a durable monument to me and mine, and a covenant between me and the world for ever! He is called upon for perpetual new exertions, and urged forward by ever-craving necessities. The *wolf* must be kept from the door; the *printer's devil* must not go empty-handed away. He makes a second attempt, and though equal perhaps to the first, because it does not excite the same surprise, it falls tame and flat on the public mind. If he pursues the real bent of his genius, he is thought to grow dull and monotonous; or if he varies his style, and tries to cater for the capricious appetite of the town, he either escapes by miracle, or breaks down that way, amidst the shout of the multitude and the condolence of friends, to see the idol of the moment pushed from its pedestal, and reduced to its proper level. There is only one living writer who can pass through this ordeal; and if he had barely written half what he has done, his reputation would have been none the less. His inexhaustible facility makes the willing world believe there is not much in it. Still, there is no alternative. Popularity, like one of the Danaides, imposes impossible tasks on her votary,—to pour water into sieves, to reap the wind. If he does nothing, he is forgotten; if he attempts more than he can perform, he gets laughed at for his pains. He is impelled by circumstances to fresh sacrifices of time, of labour, and of self-respect; parts with well-earned fame for a newspaper puff, and sells his birth-right for a mess of pottage. In the meanwhile, the public wonder why an author writes so badly and so much. With all his efforts, he builds no house, leaves no inheritance, lives from hand to mouth, and though condemned to daily drudgery for a precarious subsistence, is expected to produce none but works of first-rate genius. No; learning unconsecrated, unincorporated, unendowed, is no match for the importunate demands and thoughtless ingratitude of the reading public.

> ——— "O, let not virtue seek
> Remuneration for the thing it was!
> To have done, is to hang,
> Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail
> In monumental mockery;—
> That all, with one consent, praise new-born gaudes,
> Though they are made and moulded of things past;
> And give to dust, that is a little gilt,
> More laud than gilt o'er-dusted."

If we wished to please Mr. Godwin, we should say that his last work was his best; but we cannot do this in justice to him or to ourselves. Its greatest fault is, that (as Mr. Bayes would have declared) there is nothing "to elevate and surprise" in it. There is a story, to be sure, but you know it all beforehand, just as well as after having read the book. It is like those long straight roads that travellers complain of on the Continent, where you see from one end of your day's journey to the other, and carry the same prospect with you, like a map in your hand, the whole way. Mr. Godwin has laid no ambuscade for the unwary reader—no picturesque group greets the eye as you pass on—no sudden turn at an angle places you on the giddy verge of a precipice. Nevertheless, our author's courage never flags. Mr. Godwin is an eminent rhetorician; and he shows it in this, that he expatiates, discusses, amplifies, with equal fervour, and unabated ingenuity, on the merest accidents of the way-side, or common-places of human life. Thus, for instance, if a youth of eleven or twelve years of age is introduced upon the carpet, the author sets himself to show, with a

e candour and communicativeness, what the peculiar features of iod of life are, and "takes an inventory" of all the particulars,— sparkling eyes, roses in the cheeks, a smooth forehead, flaxen lasticity of limb, lively animal spirits, and all the flush of hope,—as ire describing a novelty, or some *terra incognita*, to the reader. In nner, when a young man of twenty is confined in a dungeon as ig to a gang of banditti, and going to be hanged, great pains are taken three or four pages to convince us, that at that period of life this ry agreeable prospect; that the feelings of youth are more acute guine than those of age; that, therefore, we are to take a due and onate interest in the tender years and blighted hopes of the younger ey; and that if any means could be found to rescue him from his perilous situation, it would be a great relief, not only to him, but manc and compassionate persons. Every man's strength is his s, and turns in some way or other against himself. Mr. Godwin n so long accustomed to trust to his own powers, and to draw upon resources, that he comes at length to imagine that he can build a f words upon nothing. When he lavished the colours of style, and berant strength of his fancy, on descriptions like those of the cha- f Margaret, the wife of St. Leon, or of his musings in the dungeon em Gabor, or of his enthusiasm on discovering the philosopher's nd being restored to youth and the plenitude of joy by drinking the *Vitæ*;—or when he recounts the long and lasting despair which ed that utter separation from his kind, and that deep solitude which l him into crowds and cities,—deeper and more appalling than the n of Bethlem Gabor,—we were never weary of being borne along by len tide of eloquence, supplied from the true sources of passion and

But when he bestows the same elaboration of phrases, and arti- rangement of sentences, to set off the most trite and obvious truisms, ess it has to us a striking effect of the *bathos*.

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nave a graver charge yet to bring against Mr. Godwin on the score than that it leads him into useless amplification: from his desire and give effect to his descriptions, he runs different characters and into one another. By not stopping short of excess and hyperbole, s the line of distinction, and "o'ersteps the modesty of nature." characters are patterns of vice or virtue. They are carried to ex- —they are abstractions of woe, miracles of wit and gaiety,—gifted ery grace and accomplishment that can be enumerated in the same nd they are not only prodigies in themselves, but destined to im- renown, though we have never heard of their names before. This ke a veteran in the art, but like the raptures of some boarding-school love with every new face or dress she sees. It is difficult to say is the most extraordinary genius,—the improvvisatore Bernardino , or his nephew, Francesco, or young Julian. Mr. Godwin still sees eyes of youth." Irene is a Greek, the model of beauty and of con- ith. Eudocia, her maid, who marries the elder Cloudesley, is a too, and nearly as handsome and as exemplary in her conduct. on the same principle, the account of Irene's devotion to her father husband, is by no means clearly discriminated. The spiritual is exaggerated till it is confounded with the passionate; and the pas- is spiritualized in the same incontinence of tropes and figures, till it

loses its distinctive character. Each sentiment, by being overdone, is neutralized into a sort of platonics. It is obvious to remark, that the novel of Cloudesley has no hero, no principal figure. The attention is divided, and wavers between Meadows, who is a candidate for the reader's sympathy through the first half volume, and whose affairs and love adventures at St. Petersburg are huddled up in haste, and broke off in the middle; Lord Danvers, who is the guilty sufferer; Cloudesley, his sullen, dilatory Mentor; and Julian, (the supposed offspring of Cloudesley, but real son of Lord Alton, and nephew of Lord Danvers,) who turns out the fortunate youth of the piece. The story is awkwardly told. Meadows begins it with an account of himself, and a topographical description of the Russian empire, which has nothing to do with the subject; and nearly through the remainder of the work, listens to a speech of Lord Danvers, recounting his own history and that of Julian, which lasts for six hundred pages without interruption or stop. It is the longest parenthesis in a narrative that ever was known. Meadows then emerges from his *incognito* once more, as if he had been hid behind a curtain, and gives the *coup-de-grace* to his own auto-biography, and the lingering sufferings of his patron. The plot is borrowed from a real event that took place concerning a disputed succession in the middle of the last century, and which gave birth not long after to a novel with the title of *Annesley*. We should like to meet with a copy of this work, in order to see how a writer of less genius would get to the end of his task, and carry the reader along with him without the aid of those subtle researches and lofty declamations with which Mr. Godwin has supplied the place of facts and circumstances. The published trial, we will hazard a conjecture, has more "mark and likelihood" in it. This is the beauty of Sir Walter Scott: he takes a legend or an actual character as he finds it, while other writers think they have not performed their engagements and acquitted themselves with applause, till they have slobbered over the plain face of nature with paint and varnish of their own. They conceive that truth is a plagiarism, and *the thing as it happened* a forgery and imposition on the public. They stand right before their subject, and say "Nay, but hear me first!" We know no other merit in the Author of Waverley than that he is never this opaque, obtrusive body, getting in the way and eclipsing the sun of truth and nature, which shines with broad universal light through his different works. If we were to describe the secret of this author's success in three words, we should say, that it consists in the *absence of egotism*.

Mr. Godwin, in his preface, remarks, that as Caleb Williams was intended as a paraphrase of "Blue Beard," the present work may be regarded as a paraphrase of the story of the "Children in the Wood." *Multum abludi imago.* He has at least contrived to take the sting of simplicity out of it. It is a very adult, self-conscious set of substitutes he has given us for the two children, wandering hand-in-hand, the robin-redbreast, and their leaf bed. The grand eloquence, the epic march of Cloudesley, is beyond the ballad-style. In a word, the fault of this and some other of the author's productions is, that the critical and didactic part overlays the narrative and dramatic part; as we see in some editions of the poets, where there are two lines of original text, and the rest of the page is heavy with the lumber and pedantry of the commentators. The writer does not call characters from the dead, or conjure them from the regions of fancy, to paint their peculiar physiognomy, or tell us their story, so much as (like the anatomist, to dissect and demonstrate on the insertion of the bones, the springs of the muscle-

and those understood principles of life and motion which are common to the species. Now, in a novel, we want the individual, and not the *genus*. The tale of Cloudesley is a dissertation on remorse. Besides, this truth of science is often a different thing from the truth of nature, which is modified by a thousand accidents, "subject to all the skyey influences;"—not a mechanical principle, brooding over and working every thing out of itself. Nothing, therefore, gives so little appearance of a resemblance to reality as this abstract identity and violent continuity of purpose. Not to say that this cutting up and probing of the internal feelings and motives, without a reference to external objects, tends, like the operations of the anatomist, to give a morbid and unwholesome taint to the surrounding atmosphere.

Mr. Godwin's mind is, we conceive, essentially active, and therefore may naturally be expected to wear itself out sooner than those that are passive to external impressions, and receive continual new accessions to their stock of knowledge and acquirement:—

——"A fiery soul that, working out its way,
Fretted the pigmy body to decay,
And o'er-inform'd its tenement of clay."

That some of this author's latter works are (in our judgment) comparatively feeble, is, therefore, no matter of surprise to us, and still less is it matter of reproach or triumph. We look upon it as a consequence incident to that constitution of mind and operation of the faculties. To quarrel with the author on this account, is to reject all that class of excellence of which he is the representative, and perhaps stands at the head. A writer who gives us *himself*, cannot do this twenty times following. He gives us the best and most prominent part of himself first: and afterwards "but the lees and dregs remain." If a writer takes patterns and *fac-similes* of external objects, he may give us twenty different works, each better than the other, though this is not likely to happen. Such a one makes use of the universe as his *common-place book*; and there is no end of the quantity or variety. The other sort of genius is his own microcosm, deriving almost all from within; and as this is different from every thing else, and is to be had at no other source, so it soon degenerates into a repetition of itself, and is confined within circumscribed limits. We do not rank ourselves in the number of "those base plebeians," as Don Quixote expresses it, "who cry *Long life to the conqueror!*" And, so far, the author is better off than the warrior, that "after a thousand victories once foiled," he does not remain in the hands of his enemies,

"And all the rest forgot, for which he toil'd."

He is not judged of by his last performance, but his best,—that which is seen farthest off, and stands out with time and distance; and, in this respect, Mr. Godwin may point to more than one monument of his powers of no mean height and durability. As we do not look upon books as fashions, and think that "a great man's memory may last more than half a year," we still look at our author's talents with the same respect as ever—on his industry and perseverance under some discouragements with more; and we shall try to explain, as briefly and impartially as we can, in what the peculiarity of his genius consists, and on what his claim to distinction is founded.

Mr. Godwin, we suspect, regards his *Political Justice* as his great work—his passport to immortality; or perhaps he balances between this and *Caleb Williams*. Now, it is something for a man to have two works of so

opposite a kind about which he and his admirers can be at a loss to say, in which he has done best. We never heard his title to originality in either of these performances called in question: yet they are as distinct, as to style and subject-matter, as if two different persons wrote them. No one in reading the philosophical treatise would suspect the embryo romance: those who personally know Mr. Godwin would as little anticipate either. The man differs from the author, at least as much as the author in this case apparently did from himself. It is as if a magician had produced some mighty feat of his art without warning. He is not deeply learned; nor is he much beholden to a knowledge of the world: he has no passion but a love of fame, or we may add to this another, the love of truth, for he has never betrayed his cause or swerved from his principles, to gratify a little temporary vanity: his senses are not acute: but it cannot be denied that he is a man of great capacity and of uncommon genius. How is this seeming contradiction to be reconciled? Mr. Godwin is by way of distinction and emphasis an author; he is so not only by habit, but by nature, and by the whole turn of his mind. To make a book is with him the prime end and use of creation. His is the *scholastic* character handed down in its integrity to the present day. If he had cultivated a more extensive intercourse with the world, with nature, or even with books, he would not have been what he is—he could not have done what he has done. Mr. Godwin in society is nothing; but shut him up by himself, set him down to write a book,—it is then that the electric spark begins to unfold itself,—to expand, to kindle, to illume, to melt, or shatter all in its way. With little knowledge of the subject, with little interest in it at first, he turns it slowly in his mind,—one suggestion gives rise to another,—he calls home, arranges, scrutinizes his thoughts; he bends his whole strength to his task; he seizes on some one view more striking than the rest, he holds it with a convulsive grasp,—he will not let it go; and this is the clue that conducts him triumphantly through the labyrinth of doubt and obscurity. Some leading truth, some master-passion, is the secret of his daring and his success, which he winds and turns at his pleasure, like Perseus his winged steed. An idea having once taken root in his mind, grows there like a germ: "at first no bigger than a mustard-seed,—then a great tree overshadowing the whole earth." The progress of his reflections resembles the circles that spread from a centre when a stone is thrown into the water. Every thing is enlarged, heightened, refined. The blow is repeated and each impression is made more intense than the last. Whatever strengthens the favourite conception is summoned to its aid: whatever weakens or interrupts it is scornfully discarded. All is the effect, not of feeling, not of fancy, not of intuition, but of one sole purpose, and of a determined will operating on a clear and consecutive understanding. His *Caleb Williams* is the illustration of a single passion: his *Political Justice* is the single proposition or view of a subject. In both, there is the same pertinacity and unity of design, the same agglomeration of objects round a centre, the same aggrandisement of some one thing at the expense of every other, the same sagacity in discovering what makes for its purpose, and blindness to every thing but that. His genius is not dramatic; but it has something of an heroic cast; he gains new trophies in intellect, as the conqueror overruns new provinces and kingdoms, by patience and boldness: and he is great because he wills to be so.

We have said that Mr. Godwin has shown great versatility of talent in his different works. The works themselves have considerable monotony;

and this must be the case, since they are all bottomed on nearly the same principle of an uniform *keeping* and strict totality of impression. We do not hold with the doctrines or philosophy of the *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice;* but we should be dishonest to deny that it is an ingenious and splendid—and we may also add, useful piece of sophistical declamation. If Mr. Godwin is not right, he has shown what is wrong in the view of morality he advocates, by carrying it to the utmost extent with unflinching spirit and ability.

Mr. Godwin was the first *whole-length* broacher of the doctrine of *Utility*. He took the whole duty of man—all other passions, affections, rules, weaknesses, oaths, gratitude, promises, friendship, natural piety, patriotism,—infused them in the glowing cauldron of universal benevolence, and ground them into powder under the unsparing weight of the convictions of the individual understanding. The entire and complicated mass and texture of human society and feeling was to pass through the furnace of this new philosophy, and to come out renovated and changed, without a trace of its former Gothic ornaments, fantastic disproportions, embossing, or relief. It was as if an angel had descended from another sphere to promulgate a new code of morality; and who, clad in a panoply of light and truth, unconscious alike of the artificial strength and inherent weakness of man's nature,—supposing him to have nothing to do with the flesh, the world, or the Devil,—should lay down a set of laws and principles of action for him, as if he were a pure spirit. But such a mere abstracted intelligence would not require any rules or forms to guide his conduct or prompt his volitions. And this is the effect of Mr. Godwin's book—to absolve a rational and voluntary agent from all ties, but a conformity to the independent dictates and strict obligations of the understanding:—

> " Within his bosom reigns another lord,
> *Reason*, sole judge and umpire of itself."

We own that if man were this pure, abstracted essence,—if he had not senses, passions, prejudices,—if custom, will, imagination, example, opinion, were nothing, and reason were *all in all;*—if the author, in a word, could establish as the foundation, what he assumes as the result of his system, namely, the omnipotence of mind over matter, and the triumph of truth over every warped and partial bias of the heart—then we see no objection to his scheme taking place, and no possibility of any other having ever been substituted for it. But this would imply that the mind's eye can see an object equally well whether it is near or a thousand miles off,—that we can take an interest in the people in the moon, or in ages yet unborn, as if they were our own flesh and blood,—that we can sympathize with a perfect stranger, as with our dearest friend, at a moment's notice,—that habit is not an ingredient in the growth of affection, that no check need be provided against the strong bias of self-love,—that we can achieve any art or accomplishment by a volition, master all knowledge with a thought; and that in this well-disciplined intuition and faultless transparency of soul, we can take cognizance (without presumption and without mistake) of all causes and consequences,—establish an equal and impartial interest in the chain of created beings,—discard all petty feelings and minor claims,—throw down the obstructions and stumbling-blocks in the way of these grand cosmopolite views of disinterested philanthropy, and hold the balance even between ourselves and the universe. It were " a consummation devoutly

to be wished," and Mr. Godwin is not to be taxed with blame for having boldly and ardently aspired to it. We meet him on the ground, not of the desirable but the practicable. It were better that a man were an angel or a god than what he is; but he can neither be one nor the other. Enclosed in the shell of self, he sees a little way beyond himself, and feels what concerns others still more slowly. To require him to attain the highest point of perfection, is to fling him back to grovel in the mire of sensuality and selfishness. He must get on by the use and management of the faculties which God has given him, and not by striking more than one half of these with the dead palsy. To refuse to avail ourselves of mixed motives and imperfect obligations, in a creature like man, whose "very name is frailty," and who is a compound of contradictions, is to lose the substance in catching at the shadow. It is as if a man would be enabled to fly by cutting off his legs. If we are not allowed to love our neighbour better than a stranger, that is, if habit and sympathy are to make no part of our affections, the consequence will be, not that we shall love a stranger more, but that we shall love our neighbour less, and care about nobody but ourselves. These partial and personal attachments are "the scale by which we ascend" to sentiments of general philanthropy. Are we to act upon pure speculation, without knowing the circumstances of the case, or even the parties?—for it would come to that. If we act from a knowledge of these, and bend all our thoughts and efforts to alleviate some immediate distress, are we to take no more interest in it than in a case of merely possible and contingent suffering? This is to put the known upon a level with the unknown, the real with the imaginary. It is to say that habit, sense, sympathy, are nonentities. It is a contradiction in terms. But if man were such a being as Mr. Godwin supposes, that is, a perfect intelligence, there would be no contradiction in it; for then he would have the same knowledge of whatever was possible, as of his gross and actual experience, and would feel the same interest in it, and act with the same energy and certainty upon a sheer hypothesis, as now upon a *matter of fact*. We can look at the clouds, but we cannot stand upon them. Mr. Godwin takes one element of the human mind, the *understanding*, and makes it the whole; and hence he falls into solecisms and extravagancies, the more striking and fatal in proportion to his own acuteness of reasoning, and honesty of intention. He has, however, the merit of having been the first to show up the abstract, or *Utilitarian*, system of morality in its fullest extent, whatever may have been pretended to the contrary; and those who wish to study the question, and not to take it for granted, cannot do better than refer to the *first* edition of the *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*; for afterwards Mr. Godwin, out of complaisance to the public, qualified, and in some degree neutralized, his own doctrines.

Our author, not contented with his ethical honours (for no work of the kind could produce a stronger sensation, or gain more converts than this did at the time), determined to enter upon a new career, and fling him into the *arena* once more; thus challenging public opinion with singular magnanimity and confidence in himself. He did not stand "shivering on the brink" of his just-acquired reputation, and fear to tempt the perilous stream of popular favour again. The success of Caleb Williams justified the experiment. There was the same hardihood and gallantry of appeal in both. In the former case, the author had screwed himself up to the most rigid logic; in the latter, he gave unbounded scope to the suggestions of fancy.

cannot be denied that Mr. Godwin is, in the pugilistic phrase, an *out-d-outer*. He does not stop till he "reaches the verge of all we hate:" is to be wondered if he sometimes falls over? He certainly did not do this Caleb Williams or St. Leon. Both were eminently successful; and both, we conceive, treated of subjects congenial to Mr. Godwin's mind. The e, in the character of Falkland, embodies that love of fame and passionate spect for intellectual excellence, which is a cherished inmate of the au-or's bosom; (the desire of undying renown breathes through every page and ıe of the story, and sheds its lurid light over the close, as it has been said at the genius of war blazes through the Iliad;)—in the hero of the other, . Leon, Mr. Godwin has depicted, as well he might, the feelings and habits a solitary recluse, placed in new and imaginary situations: but from the ıilosophical to the romantic visionary, there was perhaps but one step. Ve give the decided preference to Caleb Williams over St. Leon; but if it more original and interesting, the other is more imposing and eloquent. a the suffering and dying Falkland, we feel the heart-strings of our human eing break; in the other work, we are transported to a state of fabulous xistence, but unfolded with ample and gorgeous circumstances. The palm-ee waves over the untrodden path of luxuriant fiction; we tread with tip-oe elevation and throbbing heart to high hill-tops of boundless existence; nd the dawn of hope and renovated life makes strange music in our breast, ike the strings of Memnon's harp, touched by the morning's sun. After hese two works he fell off; he could not sustain himself at that height by he force of genius alone, and Mr. Godwin has unfortunately no resources ut his genius. He has no Edie Ochiltree at his elbow. His *New Man of Feeling* we forget; though we well remember the old one by our Scottish Addison, Mackenzie. Mandeville, which followed, is morbid and dis-agreeable; it is a description of a man and his ill humour, carried to a degree of derangement. The reader is left far behind. Mr. Godwin has attempted two plays, neither of which has succeeded, nor could succeed. If a tragedy consisted of a series of soliloquies, nobody could write it better than our author. But the essence of the drama depends on the alternation and conflict of different passions, and Mr. Godwin's *forte* is harping on the same string. He is a reformist, both as it regards the world and himself. If he is told of a fault, he amends it if he can. His *Life of Chaucer* was objected to as too romantic and dashing; and in his late *History of the Commonwealth*, he has gone into an excess the other way. His style creeps, and hitches in dates and authorities. We must not omit his *Lives of Edward and John Phillips*, the nephews of Milton—an interesting contribution to literary history; and his *Observations on Judge Eyre's Charge to the Jury in* 1794,—one of the most acute and seasonable political pamphlets that ever appeared. He some years ago wrote an *Essay on Sepulchres*, which contained an idle project enough, but was enriched with some beautiful reflections on old and new countries, and on the memorials of posthumous fame. It is a singular circumstance that our author should maintain for twenty years that Mr. Malthus's theory (in opposition to his own) was unanswerable, and then write an answer to it, which did not much mend the matter. It is worth knowing (in order to trace the history and progress of the intellectual character) that the author of *Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams* commenced his career as a dissenting clergyman; and the book-stalls sometimes present a volume of *Sermons* by him, and, we believe, an *English Grammar*

We cannot tell whether Mr. Godwin will have reason to be pleased with our opinion of him; at least, he may depend on our sincerity, and will know what it is."

JEAN PAUL FRIEDRICH RICHTER.†

Except by name, Jean Paul Friedrich Richter is little known out of Germany. The only thing connected with him, we think, that has reached this country, is his saying, imported by Madame de Staël, and thankfully pocketed by most newspaper critics:—"Providence has given to the French the empire of the land, to the English that of the sea, to the Germans that of —the air!" Of this last element, indeed, his own genius might easily seem to have been a denizen: so fantastic, many-coloured, far-grasping, every-way perplexed and extraordinary, is his mode of writing, that to translate him properly is next to impossible; nay, a dictionary of his works has actually been in part published for the use of German readers! These things have restricted his sphere of action, and may long restrict it, to his own country: but there, in return, he is a favourite of the first class: studied through all his intricacies with trustful admiration, and a love which tolerates much. During the last forty years, he has been continually before the public, in various capacities, and growing generally in esteem with all ranks of critics; till at length, his gainsayers have been either silenced or convinced; and Jean Paul, at first reckoned half-mad, has long ago vindicated his singularities to nearly universal satisfaction, and now combines popularity with real depth of endowment, in perhaps a greater degree than any other writer; being second in the latter point to scarcely more than one of his contemporaries, and in the former second to none.

The biography of so distinguished a person could scarcely fail to be interesting, especially his autobiography; which accordingly we wait for, and may in time submit to our readers, if it seem worthy: meanwhile, the history of his life, so far as outward events characterise it, may be stated in few words. He was born at Wunsiedel in Bayreuth, in March, 1763. His father was subaltern teacher in the *Gymnasium* of the place, and afterwards promoted to be clergyman at Schwarzbach on the Saale. Richter's early education was of the scantiest sort; but his fine faculties and unwearied diligence supplied every defect. Unable to purchase books, he borrowed what he could come at, and transcribed from them, often great part of their contents,— a habit of excerpting which continued with him through life, and influenced, in more than one way, his mode of writing and study. To the last, he was an insatiable and universal reader; so that his extracts accumulated on his hands, "till they filled whole chests." In 1780, he went to the university of Leipzig; with the highest character, in spite of the impediments which he had struggled with, for talent and acquirement. Like his father, he was destined for Theology; from which, however, his vagrant genius soon diverged into Poetry and Philosophy, to the neglect, and, ere

* See another character of Godwin in the review of his "Lives of the Nephews of Milton." Vol. xxv. page 485. His other works are noticed in Vol. i. page 24. Vol. iii. page 437 Vol vi. page 192. Vol. xxxv. page 362.

† Sketch of his Life and Character. Critical Remarks on his Writings.—Vol. xlvi. page 176. *June, 1827.*

long, to the final abandonment, of his appointed profession. Not well knowing what to do, he now accepted a tutorship in some family of rank; then he had pupils in his own house,—which, however, like his way of life, he often changed; for by this time he had become an author, and, in his wanderings over Germany, was putting forth,—now here, now there,—the strangest books with the strangest titles: For instance—*Greenland Lawsuits*—*Biographical Recreations under the Cranium of a Giantess*—*Selection from the Papers of the Devil*—and the like. In these indescribable performances, the splendid faculties of the writer, luxuriating as they seemed in utter riot, could not be disputed; nor, with all its extravagance, the fundamental strength, honesty, and tenderness of his nature. Genius will reconcile men to much. By degrees Jean Paul began to be considered not a strange, crackbrained mixture of enthusiast and buffoon, but a man of infinite humour, sensibility, force, and penetration. His writings procured him friends and fame; and at length a wife and a settled provision. With Caroline Mayer his good spouse, and a pension (in 1802) from the King of Bavaria, he settled in Bayreuth, the capital of his native province; where he lived thenceforth, diligent and celebrated in many new departments of literature; and died on the 14th of November, 1825, loved as well as admired by all his countrymen, and most by those who had known him most intimately.

A huge, irregular man, both in mind and person (for his portrait is quite a physiognomical study), full of fire, strength, and impetuosity, Richter seems, at the same time, to have been, in the highest degree, mild, simple-hearted, humane. He was fond of conversation, and might well shine in it: he talked, as he wrote, in a style of his own, full of wild strength and charms, to which his natural Bayreuth accent often gave additional effect. Yet he loved retirement, the country, and all natural things: from his youth upwards, he himself tells us, he may almost be said to have lived in the open air; it was among groves and meadows that he studied—often that he wrote. Even in the streets of Bayreuth, we have heard, he was seldom seen without a flower in his breast. A man of quiet tastes, and warm, compassionate affections! His friends he must have loved as few do. Of his poor and humble mother he often speaks by allusion, and never without reverence and overflowing tenderness. "Unhappy is the man," says he, "for whom his own mother has not made all other mothers venerable!" and elsewhere:—"O thou who hast still a father and a mother, thank God for it in the day when thy soul is full of joyful tears, and needs a bosom wherein to shed them!"—We quote the following sentences from Doering, almost the only memorable thing he has written in this volume:—

"Richter's studying or sitting apartment offered, about this time (1793), a true and beautiful emblem of his simple and noble way of thought, which comprehended at once the high and the low. Whilst his mother, who then lived with him, busily pursued her household work, occupying herself about stove and dresser, Jean Paul was sitting in a corner of the same room, at a simple writing-desk, with few or no books about him, but merely with one or two drawers containing excerpts and manuscripts. The jingle of the household operations seemed not at all to disturb him, any more than did the cooing of the pigeons, which fluttered to and fro in the chamber,—a place, indeed, of considerable size."—p. 8.

Our venerable Hooker, we remember, also enjoyed, "the jingle of household operations," and the more questionable jingle of shrewd tongues to boot, while he wrote; but the good thrifty mother, and the cooing pigeons, were wanting. Richter came afterwards to live in finer mansions, and had the great and learned for associates; but the gentle feelings

of those days abode with him: through life he was the same substantial, determinate, yet meek and tolerating man. It is seldom that so much rugged energy can be so blandly attempered—that so much vehemence and so much softness will go together.

The expected edition of Richter's works is to be in sixty volumes: and they are no less multifarious than extensive; embracing subjects of all sorts, from the highest problems of transcendental philosophy, and the most passionate poetical delineations, to *Golden Rules for the Weather-Prophet*, and instructions in the *Art of Falling Asleep*. His chief productions are novels: the *Unsichtbare Loge* (Invisible Lodge); *Flegeljahre* (Wild-Oats); *Life of Fixlein;* the *Jubelsenior* (Parson in Jubilee); *Schmelzle's Journey to Flätz; Katzenberger's Journey to the Bath; Life of Fibel;* with many lighter pieces; and two works of a higher order, *Hesperus* and *Titan*, the largest and the best of his novels. It was the former that first (in 1795) introduced him into decisive and universal estimation with his countrymen; the latter, he himself, with the most judicious of his critics, regarded as his masterpiece. But the name Novelist, as we in England must understand it, would ill describe so vast and discursive a genius; for with all his grotesque, tumultuous pleasantry, Richter is a man of a truly earnest, nay, high and solemn character; and seldom writes without a meaning far beyond the sphere of common romancers. *Hesperus* and *Titan* themselves, though in form nothing more than "novels of real life," as the Minerva Press would say, have solid metal enough in them to furnish whole circulating libraries, were it beaten into the usual filagree; and much which, attenuate it as we might, no quarterly subscriber could well carry with him. Amusement is often, in part almost always, a mean with Richter; rarely or never his highest end. His thoughts, his feelings, the creations of his spirit, walk before us embodied under wondrous shapes, in motley and ever-fluctuating groups: but his essential character, however he disguise it, is that of a Philosopher and moral Poet, whose study has been human nature, whose delight and best endeavour are with all that is beautiful, and tender, and mysteriously sublime in the fate or history of man. This is the purport of his writings, whether their form be that of fiction or of truth; the spirit that pervades and ennobles his delineations of common life, his wild wayward dreams, allegories, and shadowy imaginings, no less than his disquisitions of a nature directly scientific.

But in this latter province also, Richter has accomplished much. His *Vorschule der Aesthetik* (Introduction to Aesthetics*) is a work on poetic art, based on principles of no ordinary depth and compass, abounding in noble views, and, notwithstanding its frolicsome exuberance, in sound and subtle criticism; esteemed even in Germany, where Criticism has long been treated of as a science, and by such persons as Winkelmann, Kant, Herder, and the Schlegels. Of this work we could speak long, did our limits allow. We fear it might astonish many an honest brother of our craft were he to read it; and altogether perplex and dash his maturest councils, if he chanced to understand it. Richter has also written on Education, a work entitled *Levana;* distinguished by keen practical sagacity, as well as generous sentiment, and a certain sober magnificence of specula-

* From *αισθανομαι, to feel.* A word invented by Baumgarten (some eighty years ago,) to express generally the *Science of the Fine Arts;* and now in universal use among the Germans. *Perhaps* we also might as well adopt it; at least if any such *science* should ever arise among us.

tion; the whole presented in that singular style which characterizes the man. Germany is rich in works on Education; richer at present than any other country: it is there only that some echo of the Lockes and Miltons, speaking of this high matter, may still be heard; and speaking of it in the language of our own time; with insight into the actual wants, advantages, perils, and prospects of this age. Among writers on this subject, Richter holds a high place; if we look chiefly at his tendency and aims, perhaps the highest. The *Clavis Fichtiana* is a ludicrous performance, known to us only by report; but Richter is said to possess the merit, while he laughs at Fichte, of understanding him; a merit among Fichte's critics which seems to be one of the rarest. Report also, we regret to say, is all that we know of the *Campaner Thal*, a Discourse on the Immortality of the Soul; one of Richter's beloved topics, or rather the life of his whole philosophy, glimpses of which look forth on us from almost every one of his writings. He died while engaged, under recent and almost total blindness, in enlarging and remodelling this *Campaner Thal*: the unfinished manuscript was borne upon his coffin to the burial vault; and Klopstock's hymn, *Auferstehen wirst du*, "Thou shalt arise, my soul," can seldom have been sung with more appropriate application than over the grave of Jean Paul.

We defy the most careless or prejudiced reader to peruse these works without an impression of something splendid, wonderful, and daring. But they require to be studied as well as read, and this with no ordinary patience, if the reader, especially the foreign reader, wishes to comprehend rightly either their truth or their want of truth. Tried by many an accepted standard, Richter would be speedily enough disposed of; pronounced a mystic —a German dreamer—a rash and presumptuous innovator; and so consigned, with equanimity, perhaps with a certain jubilee, to the Limbo appointed for all such wind bags and deceptions. Originality is a thing we constantly clamour for, and constantly quarrel with; as if, observes our author himself, any originality but our own could be expected to content us! In fact, all strange things are apt, without fault of theirs, to estrange us at first view, and unhappily scarcely anything is perfectly plain, but what is also perfectly common. The current coin of the realm passes into all hands; and be it gold, silver, or copper, is acceptable and of known value: but with new ingots, with foreign bars, and medals of Corinthian brass, the case is widely different.

There are few writers with whom deliberation and careful distrust of first impressions are more necessary than with Richter. He is a phenomenon from the very surface; he presents himself with a professed and determined singularity; his language itself is a stone of stumbling to the critic; to critics of the grammarian species, an unpardonable, often an insuperable, rock of offence. Not that he is ignorant of grammar, or disdains the sciences of spelling and parsing; but he exercises both in a certain latitudinarian spirit; deals with astonishing liberality in parentheses, dashes, and subsidiary clauses; invents hundreds of new words, alters old ones, or, by hyphen, chains, pairs, and packs them together into most jarring combination; in short, produces sentences of the most heterogeneous, lumbering, interminable kind. Figures without limit, indeed the whole is one tissue of metaphors, and similes, and allusions to all the provinces of Earth, Sea, and Air; interlaced with epigrammatic breaks, vehement bursts, or sardonic turns, interjections, quips, puns, and even oaths! A perfect Indian jungle it seems; a boundless, unparalleled imbroglio; nothing on all sides but darkness, dissonance, con-

fusion worse confounded! Then the style of the whole corresponds, in perplexity and extravagance, with that of the parts. Every work, be it fiction or serious treatise, is embaled in some fantastic wrappage; some mad narrative accounting for its appearance, and connecting it with the author, who generally becomes a person of the drama himself, before all is over. He has a whole imaginary geography of Europe in his novels; the cities of Flachsenfingen, Haarhaar, Schecrau, and so forth, with their princes, and privy-councillors, and serene highnesses; most of whom, odd enough fellows every way, are Richter's private acquaintances, talk with him of state matters (in the purest Tory dialect), and often incite him to get on with his writing. No story proceeds without the most erratic digressions and voluminous tag-rags rolling after it in many a snaky twine. Ever and anon there occurs some "Extra-leaf," with its satirical petition, program, or other wonderful intercalation, no mortal can foresee on what. It is, indeed, a mighty maze; and often the panting reader toils after him in vain, or, baffled and spent, indignantly stops short, and retires, perhaps for ever.

All this, we must admit, is true of Richter; but much more is true also. Let us not turn from him after the first cursory glance, and imagine we have settled his account by the words Rhapsody and Affectation. They are cheap words, we allow, and of sovereign potency; we should see therefore that they be not rashly applied. Many things in Richter accord ill with such a theory. There are rays of the keenest truth, nay, steady pillars of scientific light rising through this chaos: Is it in fact a chaos, or may it be that our eyes are not of infinite vision, and have only missed the plan? Few rhapsodists are men of science, of solid learning, of rigorous study, and accurate, extensive, nay, universal knowledge; as he is. With regard to affectation also, there is much to be said. The essence of affectation is that it be *assumed*: the character is, as it were, forcibly crushed into some foreign mould, in the hope of being thereby re-shaped and beautified; the unhappy man persuades himself that he is in truth a new and wonderfully engaging creature, and so he moves about with a conscious air, though every movement betrays not symmetry, but dislocation. This it is to be affected, to walk in a vain show. But the strangeness alone is no proof of the vanity. Many men that move smoothly in the old-established railways of custom will be found to have their affectation; and perhaps here and there some divergent genius be accused of it unjustly. The *show*, though common, may not cease to be *vain*; nor become so for being uncommon. Before we censure a man for seeming what he is not, we should be sure that we know what he *is*. As to Richter in particular, we think it but fair to observe, that, strange and tumultuous as he is, there is a certain benign composure visible in his writings; a mercy, a gladness, a reverence, united in such harmony, as we cannot but think bespeaks not a false but a genuine state of mind; not a feverish and morbid, but a healthy and robust state.

The secret of the matter, perhaps, is, that Richter requires more study than most readers care to give; for as we approach more closely, many things grow clearer. In the man's own sphere there is consistency; the farther we advance into it, we see confusion more and more unfold itself into order; till at last, viewed from its proper centre, his intellectual universe, no longer a distorted, incoherent series of air-landscapes, coalesces *into* compact expansion; a vast, magnificent, and variegated scene; full.

indeed, of wondrous products, and rude, it may be, and irregular; but gorgeous and varied, and ample; gay with the richest verdure and foliage, and glittering in the brightest and kindest sun.

Richter has been called an intellectual Colossus; and in truth it is still somewhat in this light that we view him. His faculties are all of gigantic mould; cumbrous, awkward in their movements; large and splendid rather than harmonious or beautiful: yet joined in living union,—and of force and compass altogether extraordinary. He has an intellect vehement, rugged, irresistible; crushing in pieces the hardest problems; piercing into the most hidden combinations of things, and grasping the most distant: an imagination, vague, sombre, splendid, or appalling; brooding over the abysses of Being; wandering through Infinitude, and summoning before us, in its dim religious light, shapes of brilliancy, solemnity, or terror; a fancy of exuberance literally unexampled; for it pours its treasures with a lavishness which knows no limit, hanging, like the sun, a jewel on every grass-blade, and sowing the earth at large with orient pearl. But deeper than all these lies Humour, the ruling quality with Richter; as it were the central fire that pervades and vivifies his whole being. He is a humourist from his inmost soul; he thinks as a humourist, he feels, imagines, acts as a humourist: Sport is the element in which his nature lives and works. A tumultuous element for such a nature, and wild work he makes in it! A Titan in his sport as in his earnestness, he oversteps all bound, and riots without law or measure. He heaps Pelion upon Ossa, and hurls the universe together and asunder like a case of playthings. The Moon "bombards" the Earth, being a rebellious satellite; Mars "preaches" to the other Planets very singular doctrine; nay, we have Time and Space themselves playing fantastic tricks: it is an infinite masquerade; all Nature is gone forth mumming in the strangest guises.

Yet the anarchy is not without its purpose; these vizards are not mere hollow masks; but there are living faces beneath them, and this mumming has its significance. Richter is a man of mirth, but he seldom or never condescends to be a merry-andrew. Nay, inspite of its extravagance, we should say that his humour is of all his gifts intrinsically the finest and most genuine. It has such witching turns; there is something in it so capricious, so quaint, so heartfelt. From his Cyclopean workshop, and its fuliginous limbecs, and huge unwieldy machinery, the little shrivelled twisted figure comes forth at last, so perfect and so living, to be for ever laughed at and for ever loved! Wayward as he seems, he works not without forethought: like Rubens, by a single stroke, he can change a laughing face into a sad one. But in his smile itself a touching pathos may lie hidden, a pity too deep for tears. He is a man of feeling, in the noblest sense of that word; for he loves all living with the heart of a brother; his soul rushes forth, in sympathy with gladness or sorrow, with goodness or grandeur, over all creation. Every gentle and generous affection, every thrill of mercy, every glow of nobleness, awakens in his bosom a response, nay, strikes his spirit into harmony; a wild music as of wind-harps, floating round us in fitful swells, but soft sometimes, and pure and soul-entrancing as the song of angels! Aversion itself with him is not hatred: he despises much, but justly, with tolerance also, with placidity, and even a sort of love. Love, in fact, is the atmosphere he breathes in, the medium through which he looks: his is the spirit which gives life and beauty to whatever it embraces. Inanimate Nature itself is no longer an insensible assemblage

of colours and perfumes, but a mysterious Presence, with which he communes in unutterable sympathies. We might call him, as he once called Herder, "a Priest of Nature, a mild Bramin," wandering amid spicy groves, and under benignant skies. The infinite Night, with her solemn aspects, Day, and the sweet approach of Even and Morn, are full of meaning for him. He loves the green Earth with her streams and forests, her flowery leas and eternal skies; loves her with a sort of passion, in all her vicissitudes of light and shade; his spirit revels in her grandeur and charms; expands like the breeze over wood and lawn, over glade and dingle, stealing and giving odours.

It has sometimes been made a wonder that things so discordant should go together—that men of humour are often likewise men of sensibility. But the wonder should rather be to see them divided; to find true genial humour dwelling in a mind that was coarse or callous. The essence of humour is sensibility; warm, tender fellow-feeling with all forms of existence. Nay, we may say, that unless seasoned and purified by humour, sensibility is apt to run wild; will readily corrupt into disease, falsehood, or in one word, sentimentality. Witness Rousseau, Zimmerman, in some points also St. Pierre; to say nothing of living instances; or of the Kotzebues, and other pale hosts of wobegone mourners, whose wailings, like the howl of an Irish wake, have from time to time cleft the general ear. The last perfection of our faculties, says Schiller, with a truth far deeper than it seems, is, that their activity, without ceasing to be sure and earnest, becomes *sport*. True humour is sensibility, in the most catholic and deepest sense; but it is this *sport* of sensibility; wholesome and perfect therefore; as it were, the playful teasing fondness of a mother to her child.

That faculty of irony, that caricature, which often passes by the name of humour, but consists chiefly in a certain superficial distortion or reversal of objects, and ends at best in laughter, bears no resemblance to the humour of Richter. A shallow endowment this; and often more a habit than an endowment. It is but a poor fraction of humour; or rather, it is the body to which the soul is wanting; any life it has being false, artificial, and irrational. True humour springs not more from the head than from the heart; it is not contempt; its essence is love; it issues not in laughter, but in still smiles, which lie far deeper. It is a sort of inverse sublimity; exalting, as it were, into our affections what is below us, while sublimity draws down into our affections what is above us. The former is scarcely less precious or heart-affecting than the latter; perhaps it is still rarer, and, as a test of genius, still more decisive. It is, in fact, the bloom and perfume, the purest effluence of a deep, fine, and loving nature; a nature in harmony with itself, reconciled to the world and its stintedness and contradiction; nay, finding in this very contradiction new elements of beauty as well as goodness. Among our own writers, Shakspeare in this, as in all other provinces, must have his place; yet not the first: his humour is heartfelt, exuberant, warm, but seldom the tenderest or most subtle. Swift inclines more to simple irony; yet he had genuine humour too, and of no unloving sort, though cased, like Ben Jonson's, in a most bitter and caustic rind. Sterne follows next; our last specimen of humour, and, with all his faults, our best; our finest, if not our strongest, for *Yorick*, and *Corporal Trim*, and *Uncle Toby*, have yet no brother but in *Don Quixote*, far as he lies above them. Cervantes is indeed the purest of all humourists; so gentle and *genial*,—*so full*, yet so ethereal, is his humour, and in such accordance with

itself and his whole noble nature. The Italian mind is said to abound in humour; yet their classics seem to give us no right emblem of it: except, perhaps, in Ariosto, there appears little in their current poetry that reaches the region of true humour. In France, since the days of Montaigne, it seems to be nearly extinct: Voltaire, much as he dealt in ridicule, never rises into humour; and even with Molière, it is far more an affair of the understanding than of the character.

That, in this point, Richter excels all German authors, is saying much for him, and may be said truly. Lessing has humour,—of a sharp, rigid, substantial, and, on the whole, genial sort; yet the ruling bias of his mind is to logic. So likewise has Wieland, though much diluted by the general *loquacity* of his nature, and impoverished still farther by the influences of a cold, meagre, French scepticism. Among the Ramlers, Gellerts, Hagedorns, of Frederick the Second's time, we find abundance, and delicate in kind too, of that light matter which the French call pleasantry; but little or nothing that deserves the name of humour. In the present age, however, there is Goethe, with a rich true vein; and this sublimated, as it were, to an essence, and blended in still union with his whole mind. Tieck also, among his many fine susceptibilities, is not without a warm, keen sense for the ridiculous; and a humour rising, though by short fits, and from a much lower atmosphere, to be poetic. But of all these men, there is none that, in depth, copiousness, and intensity of humour, can be compared with Jean Paul. He alone exists in humour; lives, moves, and has his being in it. With him it is not so much united to his other qualities, of intellect, fancy, imagination, moral feeling, as these are united to it; or rather unite themselves to it, and grow under its warmth, as under their proper temperature and climate. Not as if we meant to assert that his humour is in all cases perfectly natural and pure; nay, that it is not often extravagant, untrue, or even absurd: but still, on the whole, the core and life of it are genuine, subtle, spiritual. Not without reason have his panegyrists named him *Jean Paul der Einzige*—"Jean Paul the Only:" in one sense or the other, either as praise or censure, his critics also must adopt this epithet; for surely in the whole circle of literature we look in vain for his parallel. Unite the sportfulness of Rabelais, and the best sensibility of Sterne, with the earnestness and even in slight portions, the sublimity of Milton; and let the mosaic brain of old Burton give forth the workings of this strange union, with the pen of Jeremy Bentham.

To say how, with so peculiar a natural endowment, Richter should have shaped his mind by culture, is much harder than to say that he has shaped it wrong. Of affectation we will neither altogether clear him, nor very loudly pronounce him guilty. That his manner of writing is singular,—nay, in fact, a wild complicated Arabesque, no one can deny. But the true question is,—how nearly does this manner of writing represent his real manner of thinking and existing? With what degree of freedom does it allow this particular form of being to manifest itself; or what fetters and perversions does it lay on such manifestation? For the great law of culture is: let each become all that he was created capable of being; expand, if possible, to his full growth; resisting all impediments, casting off all foreign, especially all noxious adhesions; and show himself at length in his own shape and stature, be these what they may. There is no uniform of excellence, either in physical or spiritual nature: all *genuine* things are what they ought to be. The rein-deer is good and beautiful, so likewise

is the elephant. In literature it is the same: "every man," says Lessing, "has his own style, like his own nose." True there are noses of wonderful dimensions; but no nose can be justly amputated by the public,—not even the nose of Slawkenbergius himself; so it *be* a real nose, and no wooden one put on for deception's sake and mere show.

To speak in grave language, Lessing means, and we agree with him, that the outward style is to be judged of by the inward qualities of the spirit which it is employed to body forth; that without prejudice to critical propriety, well understood, the former may vary into many shapes as the latter varies; that, in short, the grand point for a writer, is not to be of this or that external make and fashion, but in every fashion to be genuine, vigorous, alive—alive with his whole being, consciously, and for beneficial results.

Tried by this test, we imagine Richter's wild manner will be found less imperfect than many a very tame one. To the man it may not be unsuitable. In that singular form there is a fire, a splendour, a benign energy, which persuades us into tolerance, nay into love, of much that might otherwise offend. Above all, this man, alloyed with imperfections as he may be, is consistent and coherent: he is at one with himself; he knows his aims, and pursues them in sincerity of heart, joyfully, and with undivided will. An harmonious developement of being, the first and last object of all true culture, has therefore been attained; if not completely, at least more completely than in one of a thousand men. Nor let us forget, that in such a nature, it was not of easy attainment; that where much was to be developed, some imperfection should be forgiven. It is true, the beaten paths of literature lead the safeliest to the goal; and the talent pleases us most which submits to shine with new gracefulness through old forms. Nor is the noblest and most peculiar mind too noble or peculiar for working by prescribed laws: Sophocles, Shakspeare, Cervantes, and, in Richter's own age, Goëthe, how little did they innovate on the given forms of composition, how much in the spirit they breathed into them! All this is true; and Richter must lose of our esteem in proportion. Much, however, will remain; and why should we quarrel with the high, because it is not the highest? Richter's worst faults are nearly allied to his best merits; being chiefly exuberance of good, irregular squandering of wealth, a dazzling with excess of true light. These things may be pardoned the more readily, as they are little likely to be imitated.

On the whole, Genius has privileges of its own; it selects an orbit for itself; and be this never so eccentric, if it is indeed a celestial orbit, we mere star-gazers must at last compose ourselves; must cease to cavil at it, and begin to observe it, and calculate its laws. That Richter is a new Planet in the intellectual heavens, we dare not affirm; an atmospheric Meteor he is not wholly; perhaps a Comet, that, though with long aberrations, and shrouded in a nebulous veil, has yet its place in the empyrean.

Of Richter's individual works, of his opinions, his general philosophy of life, we have no room left us to speak. Regarding his novels, we may say that, except in some few instances, and those chiefly of the shorter class, they are not what, in strict language, we can term unities: with much *callida junctura* of parts, it is rare that any of them leaves on us the impression of a perfect, homogenous, indivisible whole. A true work of art *requires to be fused* in the mind of its creator, and, as it were, to be poured

forth from his imagination, (though not from his pen,) at one simultaneous gush. Richter's works do not always bear sufficient marks of having been in *fusion*; yet neither are they merely *rivetted* together; to say the least, they have been *welded*. A similar remark applies to many of his characters: indeed, more or less, to all of them, except such as are entirely humorous, or have a large dash of humour. In this latter province, certainly, he is at home; a true poet, a maker: his *Siebenkas*, his *Schmelzle*, even his *Fibel* and *Fixlein*, are living figures. But in heroic personages, passionate, massive, overpowering as he is, we have scarcely ever a complete ideal: art has not attained to the concealment of itself. With his heroines again he is more successful; they are often true heroines, though perhaps with too little variety of character; bustling, buxom mothers and housewives, with all the caprices, perversities, and warm generous helpfulness of women; or white, half-angelic creatures, meek, still, long-suffering, high-minded, of tenderest affections, and hearts crushed, yet uncomplaining. Supernatural figures he has not attempted; and wisely, for he cannot write without belief. Yet many times he exhibits an imagination of a singularity, nay, on the whole, of a truth and grandeur, unexampled elsewhere. In his *dreams* there is a mystic complexity, a gloom, and amid the dim gigantic, half-ghastly shadows, gleamings of a wizard splendour, which almost recall to us the visions of Ezekiel. By readers who have studied the *Dream in the New-Year's Eve*, we shall not be mistaken.

Richter's Philosophy, a matter of no ordinary interest, both as it agrees with the common philosophy of Germany and disagrees with it, must not be touched on for the present. One only observation we shall make: it is not mechanical or sceptical; it springs not from the forum or the laboratory, but from the depths of the human spirit; and yields as its fairest product a noble system of Morality, and the firmest conviction of Religion. In this latter point, we reckon him peculiarly worthy of study. To a careless reader he might seem the wildest of infidels; for nothing can exceed the freedom with which he bandies to and fro the dogmas of religion, nay, sometimes the highest objects of Christian reverence. There are passages of this sort which will occur to every reader of Richter; but which, not to fall into the error we have already blamed in Madame de Staël, we shall refrain from quoting. More light is in the following: "Or," enquires he in his usual abrupt way, (Note to *Schmelzle's Journey*), "Or are all your Mosques, Episcopal Churches, Pagodas, Chapels of Ease, Tabernacles, and Pantheons, any thing else but the Ethnic Forecourt of the Invisible Temple, and its Holy of Holies?" Yet, independently of all dogmas, nay, in spite of many, Richter is, in the highest sense of the word, religious. A reverence, not a self-interested fear, but a noble reverence for the spirit of all goodness, forms the crown and glory of his culture. The fiery elements of his nature have been purified under holy influences, and chastened by a principle of mercy and humility into peace and well-doing. An intense and continual faith in man's immortality and native grandeur accompanies him; from amid the vortices of life, he looks up to a heavenly loadstar; the solution of what is visible and transient, he finds in what is invisible and eternal. He has doubted, he denies, and yet he believes. "When, in your last hour," says he (*Levana*, p. 251.) "when in your last hour, (think of this,) all faculty in the broken spirit shall fade away, and die into inanity—imagination, thought, effort, enjoyment,—then

at last will the night-flower of Belief alone continue blooming, and refresh with its perfumes in the last darkness."

To reconcile these seeming contradictions, to explain the grounds, the manner, the congruity of Richter's belief, cannot be attempted here. We recommend him to the study, the tolerance, and even the praise, of all men who have enquired into this highest of questions with a right spirit; inquired with the martyr fearlessness, but also with the martyr reverence, of men that love Truth, and will not accept a lie. A frank, fearless, honest, yet truly spiritual faith is of all things the rarest in our time.

Of writings which, though with many reservations, we have praised so much, our hesitating readers may demand some specimen. To unbelievers, unhappily, we have none of a convincing sort to give. Ask us not to represent the Peruvian forests by three twigs plucked from them; or the cataracts of the Nile by a handful of its water! To those, meanwhile, who will look on twigs as mere dissevered twigs, and a handful of water as only so many drops, we present the following. It is a summer Sunday night; Jean Paul is taking leave of the Hukelum Parson and his wife; like him, we have long laughed at them, or wept for them; like him also, we are sad to part from them.

"We were all of us too deeply moved. We at last tore ourselves asunder from repeated embraces; my friend retired with the soul whom he loves. I remained alone, behind him with the Night.

"And I walked without aim through woods, through valleys, and over brooks, and through sleeping villages, to enjoy the great Night, like a Day. I walked, and still looked, like the magnet, to the region of midnight, to strengthen my heart at the gleaming twilight, at this upstretching aurora of a morning beneath our feet. White night-butterflies flitted, white blossoms fluttered, white stars fell, and the white snow-powder hung silvery in the high Shadow of the Earth, which reaches beyond the Moon, and which is our Night. Then began the Eolian Harp of the Creation to tremble and to sound, blown on from above; and my immortal Soul was a string in this Harp.—The heart of a brother, everlasting Man, swelled under the everlasting heaven, as the seas swell under the sun and under the moon.—The distant village clocks struck midnight, mingling, as it were, with the ever-pealing tone of ancient Eternity.—The limbs of my buried ones touched cold on my soul, and drove away its blots, as dead hands heal eruptions of the skin.—I walked silently through little hamlets, and close by their outer church-yards, where crumbled upcast coffin-boards were glimmering, while the once bright eyes that had lain in them were mouldered into grey ashes. Could thought! clutch not like a cold spectre at my heart: I look up to the starry sky, and an everlasting chain stretches thither, and over, and below; and all is Life, and Warmth, and Light, and all is Godlike or God. . . Towards morning, I desired thy late lights, little city of my dwelling, which I belong to on this side the grave; I returned to the Earth; and in thy steeples behind the by-advanced great midnight, it struck half past two: about this hour, in 1794, Mars went down in the west, and the Moon rose in the east; and my soul desired, in grief for the noble warlike blood which is still streaming on the blossoms of Spring: Ah, retire, bloody War, like red Mars; and thou, still Peace, come forth like the mild divided Moon!"—End of *Quintus Fixlein*.

Such, seen through no uncoloured medium, but in dim remoteness, and sketched in hurried, transitory outline, are some features of Jean Paul Friedrich Richter and his works. Germany has long loved him; to England also he must one day become known; for a man of this magnitude belongs not to one people, but to the world. What our countrymen may decide of him, still more what may be his fortune with posterity, we will not try to foretell. Time has a contracting influence on many a wide-spread fame; yet of Richter we will say, that he may survive much. There is in him that which does not die; that Beauty and Earnestness of soul, that spirit of Humanity, of Love, and mild Wisdom, over which the vicissitudes of mode have no sway. This is that excellence of the inmost nature which alone confers immortality on writings; that charm which still, under every defacement, binds us to the pages of our own Hookers, and Taylors, and Brownes, when their way of thought has long ceased to be ours, and the *most* valued of their merely intellectual opinions have passed away, as ours

too must do, with the circumstances and events in which they took their shape or rise. To men of a right mind, there may long be in Richter much that has attraction and value. In the moral desert of vulgar Literature, with its sandy wastes, and parched, bitter, and too often poisonous shrubs, the writings of this man will rise in their irregular luxuriance, like a cluster of date-trees, with its greensward and well of water, to refresh the pilgrim, in the sultry solitude, with nourishment and shade.

SCHILLER AND GOETHE.*

It is so difficult a matter, in general, to get at the truth with regard to literary men, and particularly those who have long occupied a prominent position in the eyes of the public, that any authentic contributions to the history of their minds must be received with satisfaction, though mingled with much that is but of trifling or doubtful interest. Biographies, written by third parties, must always be but unsatisfactory. The outward actions may be described; though, even as to these, the picture must often be distorted by erroneous or defective information, or discoloured by the peculiar feelings, opinions, and prejudices of the biographer; but the inward man himself, his moral and intellectual organization, can be but feebly, if at all, indicated to our view. Auto-biographies, again, though not liable to these objections, are, in general, but apologies for the particular views or conduct of the writer. They may be undertaken in the spirit of sincerity; Truth may at first hold the pen; but, somehow or other, Vanity soon contrives to wrest it out of her hand, and to write down whatever Self-love, sitting concealed behind, is pleased to dictate. But this objection does not apply to familiar letters written with no eye to publication, in which, though the writer is truly painting his own character, he does it unconsciously; and where the scattered strokes which he has traced first assume significance and meaning, when they are all collected and combined—perhaps after death has for ever put a stop to the chance of their being retouched or altered by the hand by which they were originally drawn.

Such, we think, will be found to be the case with the Letters of Schiller and Goëthe. Many of them, it is true, might have been omitted entirely, with advantage to the interest of the collection; others are full of details, which, if interesting at all, can only be so from the character of the men to whom they relate. Commissions for the purchase of carpets—presents of biscuit—dissertations on fine paper copies, and coarse paper copies—and covers for periodicals, "white, black, and grey, with all their trumpery"—thoughts on colds and meazles, rheumatism, and the other ills which poor Schiller, in particular, was heir to—these, and many other such matters of no special moment, must be put up with, because the very homeliness and familiarity of these details are our guarantee for the confidential sincerity of the rest. But with these are intermingled acute and profound observations on literature and life—free and eloquent speculation on philosophical opinions—many lights as to the origin and progress of their

* Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goëthe, in den Jahren, 1794 bis 1805. (Correspondence between Schiller and Goëthe, from 1794 to 1805.) 6 vols. 8vo. Stuttgart und Tubingen. 1829.—Vol. liii page 82. March, 1831.

respective literary enterprises—their habits of study and composition—their hopes and fears as to the great and stormy events, the moral and political revolutions which were passing around them—their views, on some points, harmonizing,—in others, standing opposed to each other, in strong contrast, both in their substance and in the manner in which they are advocated and illustrated. Schiller writes with the earnestness, the logical sequence, and amplitude of one who arrives at his conclusions by patient progressive investigation. He cannot discuss his subject in a sentence, or content himself with a hint or shadow of his meaning. Goëthe, on the contrary, leaps lightly from one point of his argument to another, and reaches his mark with rapidity: more comprehensive in his views, more diffusive in his sympathies, he has more subjects that interest him, and less time to bestow on any one in particular; more tempered in his feelings, he is often calm and composed where his friend was all fire and vehemence. The one writes with a stoical energy, the other with an almost epicurean tranquillity.

We have said *almost*, for it would be injustice to Goëthe to assimilate him even to the best of that sect to which we have alluded. At the time when he was first brought into contact with Schiller, his opinions, literary and moral, might be considered as pretty completely formed; some modification may since have been made, but the grand outlines continue the same. Already the fabric of his mind displayed that singular symmetry and harmony of parts, which, as when we look at St. Peter's, makes us for a moment forget its vastness. The colossal and conflicting masses which had at first seemed to lie about, without connexion, had all, by culture and discipline, been built up, and fused together with a compactness and felicity of adjustment, of which literary history scarcely affords a parallel: noiselessly and rapidly it had risen, almost like an exhalation, and already stood proudly eminent amidst the edifices which surrounded it.

But though the progress of Goëthe's intellectual fabric had scarcely been marked, the change had indeed been almost a total one. Like most profound thinkers, he had had his share of the doubts, the gloomy despairing feelings, the thoughts that for a time wander through eternity, only to be driven back again to the realities of life, and of the despondency which the prospect of the world, with its many mysteries and contradictions, must excite in every mind which does not repose in confidence upon revealed religion, and the solution which it affords, or promises, of the perplexities of existence. The ideas thus fermenting in his mind, were brought to a height by the sudden death of his friend, Jerusalem: like water long on the point of freezing, they sprang into solidity by a touch, and *Werther* was the result; and all Germany was for a time overrun with insane pictures of sceptical gloom, and new editions of the "Miseries of Human Life."

But in healthy and vigorous minds, this state of feeling, though perhaps, like some of those disorders to which our bodily frame is subjected, it may even be useful in the ultimate formation of the constitution, cannot last long. The path which at first led us into darkness, if steadily pursued, guides us back again to the day. We soon come to perceive, that if life has many evils, it has also many comforts; that it is better to bear, and, where we can, to alleviate those evils, than to whine over them; nay, that in activity, moral and intellectual, a remedy may be found for many of those which appeared most formidable; that if joy be transient, misery is *not immortal*; if crime and selfishness too often sadden our hopes, some

trait of self-devotion, some emanation of that benevolence which makes the whole world akin, ever and anon occurs to revive our confidence, and to remind us that man is not entirely of the earth, earthy.

These considerations are forced upon us by our intercourse with our fellow-men; nor was it possible that they could long escape the observation of Goëthe, in whom the reflective powers were as conspicuously developed from the first, as his imaginative faculties, and in whom good health, and natural cheerfulness, were combined. Accordingly, the very utterance of his complaints through the mouth of Werther seemed to have allayed his disorder; he had raved himself to rest; and while his countrymen were still enveloped in the tempest he had raised, and tossing in their cockboats on a sea of doubt, with the thick shadow of night overhead, he, the author of the storm, had worked his way through, and was looking quietly back upon the vexed ocean, with the firm ground of reason beneath his feet, and the guiding lights of Hope and Faith appearing to him again through a thousand openings in that still troubled but fast clearing sky.

It is not often that men escape thus unhurt from these moral storms. They generally leave some part of their stores behind them in their retreat. A man like Voltaire, for instance, attains tranquillity, or an appearance of tranquillity, by banishing passion, and extracting from the enigma of human life nothing but materials for wit and sarcasm. His sympathy with the great and good, he throws behind him for ever, as a useless incumbrance. The man whose better feelings, and stronger faith, protect him from this unsatisfactory and hollow resource, too often forgets the practical in the visionary, and, absorbing himself in cloudy reveries, loses his sympathy with human life as it is, with its real interests and duties, and, of course, loses his hold on the feelings and sympathies of his fellow-men. But Goëthe emerges from the limbo of doubt, without bating a jot or scruple of his varied gifts. He does not throw his wit overboard, in order to save his pathos; nor make shipwreck of his feeling, nor attempt to lighten his bark by getting rid of the heavy ballast of philosophy. Quietly and steadily he steers through all; he only keeps a firmer hold of the helm, and restores the equilibrium of his vessel, by balancing his antagonist forces against each other. He lands his whole freight in safety, and forthwith rebuilds his intellectual home from those varied stores, laying its foundations deep in the spirit of reverence, cementing its broad and massive front by the bands of reason, and gilding its airy and glittering pinnacles with the sunshine of wit and graceful humour. It is the Holy Alliance of the head and heart, in which neither compromises its independence, but each supports, and relieves, and elevates the other.

A change in a man's speculative views soon gives a corresponding tone to his writings, unless he be a mere imitator, who only reproduces the ideas of others, instead of drawing from his own stores of intellect and feeling. As society and nature present themselves to our view, so they are reflected back;—harmonious and consistent, from the well regulated mind, —faint and wavering, from the vacillating,—perplexed and perplexing, from the disordered. The cheerful heart paints the world as it finds it, like a sunny landscape; the morbid mind depicts it like a sterile wilderness, palled with thick vapours, and dark as the valley of the shadow of death. It is the mirror, in short, on which it is caught, which lends to the face of nature the aspect of its own turbulence or tranquillity.

The softened spirit and calm extension of view which had opened upon

Goëthe's mind could not fail shortly to manifest its influence in his theories of art and composition. The clamorous energy of Werther, his vain struggles against the rules of society, his angry questioning with his fate, no longer suit with his more tempered views; nay, at the stormy ejaculations he is now almost tempted to smile, if he can be moved to smile at any thing. Even a rude sketch of the reality of chivalrous life, like Goëtz, now appears to him exaggerated—not perhaps exaggerated or untrue in itself, but unsuited to the purposes of art, which seeks to paint life as a whole, —not in fragments, but in its spirits and essence, and therefore is not satisfied with the partial and local, but aspires after general or universal truth. We may take a single captive with Sterne, shut him up in his dungeon, and "send our hearers weeping to their beds" with the stern and iron truth of the picture; but then it is not a true picture of life as a whole,—of that life whose joy and sorrow, crime and virtue, meanness and magnificence, jostle each other, and which, in its enlarged significance and moral meaning, can only be indicated by a work the spirit of which is varied, and tempered, and comprehensive as its own. Hence in these productions which characterise the second era of Goëthe's apprenticeship, the first thing that strikes us (and at first unquestionably with rather a disappointed feeling) is the absence of all scenes of strong passion; when our feelings, sympathizing with the tale, are yielding themselves to his spell, he suddenly, and with apparent caprice, leaves the point, and shoots off into some devious alley, into which we follow him at first with reluctance, till, without knowing how, we feel ourselves again absorbed in the new prospects to which he has introduced us. But this is, after all, no capricious diversion, but the practical exposition of that principle, which, considering every great literary composition as in itself a microcosm, thus endeavours to imitate the ever shifting variety of life, and, passing with a light touch over all the chords of feeling, tries to emulate its harmony, and to leave on the mind that resignation and tranquillity which arises from the comprehensive view of the present condition and future destiny of man. Thus, tranquillity is the grand feature of Goëthe's matured works; passion is always presented to us in its wane, rather than in its crisis; nothing engrosses, nothing overpowers: his sunshines, dimmed with a gentle haze, and fading away into transparent shade, come mellowed and refreshing upon the eye;—while, stealing in upon the darkest spots in the bosom of night, we can trace the glimmering light and "golden exhalations of the dawn."

Schiller presents himself in some points in strong contrast to his friend. Many things had concurred to retard in him the growth of this moral serenity, or, as it might appear to many, indifference;—to confine his sympathies to a narrower channel, and permanently to incline the balance of his mind towards solemnity and earnestness. He had suffered much from poverty, something also from political persecution; while illness, adding the evil of physical pain to other sources of discomfort, saddened, though it could not suppress, his activity of mind. Agitated, like Goëthe, at an early stage of his history, with the same restless and gloomy spirit of enquiry and discontent with the world around him, he had given vent to his complaints and his doubts with the same exaggeration, in his *Robbers* and his *Letters of Julius and Raphael*. From this comfortless condition he too had emerged, but not with the same integrity of all his faculties, or with all his wealth so unharmed about him. Some portions of it are damaged: his sympathy with the lighter spirit of life is damped for ever; nor will

hose stores which he has saved cohere with the same compactness and ordial union as in the case of Goëthe. Goëthe, with the world smiling bout him, with renewed health and constant activity, is open to all its nfluences, and, without leaving the field of reality, can oppose its light nd ludicrous combinations as a counterpoise to its griefs and evils. But chiller, to whom these views present themselves more rarely, and sicklied ver with the cast of his own melancholy, must draw his topics of conolation, not so much from the actual as the future, by letting loose his magination upon the ideal, and by exalting, spiritualizing, and deepening he emotions with which in real life we are familiar. But, ever and anon, he spirit of deep reflection, the old Adam of metaphysical enquiry which ıad spoken in the mouth of Charles and Julius, comes over him; and the ıiry creations of the fancy, arrested in mid air, and suddenly subjected to ı strict analysis beneath the cold grey light of philosophy, fade away into ınsubstantial things. Instead of cordially uniting, the reason and the imagination, like Varro and Æmilius in the campaign against Hannibal, take the command on alternate days, and divided counsels, and inconsistent and wavering execution, are too often the natural result. When he writes history, the poet is but too visible; when he writes poetry, the dramatist is often lost in the political or ethical philosopher. Shut out too, as it were, by the effects of illness, from any sympathy with gayety, he had also applied himself with less diligence to the acquisition of general knowledge, and his thoughts moved in a narrower tract. None knew all this better than Schiller himself, nor better appreciated the extent of that gulf which divided his views on these subjects from those of his friend.

"Do not expect in me," says he, in one of his first letters (August 1794), "any very great actual wealth of ideas,—for this I must look to you. My need and endeavour is, to make much out of little; and when you are better acquainted with my poverty in all which is called acquired knowledge, you will probably think that I have on the whole succeeded in doing so pretty well. From the smallness of my circle of ideas, I move over it the quicker and the oftener, make a better use of my little means, and attain in the form that multiplicity and variety which is wanting in the subject. You labour to simplify your mighty world of ideas; I seek variety for my little possessions. You have to govern a whole kingdom; I only a tolerably respectable family of ideas, which I would gladly increase and multiply to a little world. Your mind works by intuition to an extraordinary degree, and all your thinking powers appear to have chosen the imagination as their common representative. In truth, this is the highest that man can attain, as soon as he has succeeded in generalizing his views and making his sentiments legislative. This has been your aim, and how completely have you succeeded! My understanding works far more by symbols, and thus I float, like an hermaphrodite, between conception and perception, between rule and sentiment, technicality and genius. This it is which, particularly in my earlier years, gave me so awkward an air, both in the field of speculation and poetry; for poetry took me by surprise when I should have philosophized, and philosophy when I should have been poetical. And even now it happens often enough, that imagination destroys my abstractions, and cold understanding my verse. Oh! if I could only become so far master of both powers that I could with freedom assign bounds to each, my lot would be enviable; but, alas! now when I first begin to know and to use my moral strength, disease threatens to undermine my physical powers."

Though Schiller speaks thus disparagingly of his own genius, compared with that of his rival, in whom he seemed to consider all the mental powers as blended in the most desirable proportions, and with the most intimate union, it is not difficult to see that his own views, as embodied in his works, were likely to be at least as popular as the more refined and subtle views of Goëthe. Both are idealists; but the ideal of the one consists in repose arising from variety and quick succession of emotions, none of which are allowed to become predominant or lasting; that of the other in the entire banishment or sequestration of some classes of ideas, and the refining or rendering more intense those which remain to be developed. We are not here to enter upon the question as to the comparative truth of these views (that would be

a matter by no means to be discussed in a few pages); but it is obvious that the latter is the one most likely to be understood and appreciated by the great class to whom poetry must be directed. The first, it requires an effort to understand and to sympathize with; we must seek in it an esoteric purpose beyond the mere interest arising from the events delineated; and, after all, it cannot be denied, that the effect is as often shadowy and theatrical as profound, and that the whole hangs too much in the same metaphorical atmosphere as the types and figures of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. Accordingly, such was very much the feeling with which Goëthe's "Pilgress," his Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship, was received; and even now we suspect that, by the mass of readers, it is praised more because it bears the name of Goëthe, than from any great sympathy with the views upon which it appears to be constructed.

Schiller's actual views of composition, whatever might be his admiration for Goëthe's theoretically, were far more popular. He who ran might read them. They were only a transcript of the emotions, feelings, and passions of life—somewhat purified and heightened a little with the colours of poetry, but clothed in no masquerade garb, nor shorn of any of their force, nor exhibited in any elaborate sequence and contrast to suit some particular view;—a section, in short, from life, instead of a philosophical epitome of its leading features. He moved the mind, and strong emotion is always pleasure; he appealed to the best sympathies of our nature, and his energetic appeal is rarely unanswered: and if, in one sense, less wisdom is embodied in them, if his lessons are less adapted to all circumstances, it can hardly be denied that they are given with more energy and distinctness. Even the comparative limitation of the subjects with which he was conversant was in one sense favourable to his purpose; for Goëthe seems too often to start from his subject, to hover for a time over some of the collateral topics, in all of which his mind was interested, while Schiller moves straight forward, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, and though embarrassed a little by the trappings which he wore for a time, gaining his mark at last with unerring certainty.

MISS EDGEWORTH.*

Miss Edgeworth belongs to a class of writers who are less liable to failures than most of those who adventure in the public pursuit of excellence or distinction. Her works are not happy effusions of fancy, or casual inspirations of genius. There is nothing capricious or accidental about them: but they are the mature and seasonable fruits of those faculties that work the surest and continue the longest in vigour,—of powerful sense and nice moral perception, joined to a rare and invaluable talent for the observation and display of human character,—tempered, in its wholesome exercise, with far more indulgence to its less glittering qualities than usually falls to the lot of those who are gifted with so quick a sense of its weakness and folly. Fortunately for mankind, these are the least precarious as well as the most important of all the faculties which belong to our frail nature; and

* Vol. xxviii. page 390. August, 1817.

are not only for the most part at the command of their possessor, but can seldom be called into action without diffusing their beneficial influence to others.

But though Miss Edgeworth can never absolutely fail in her endeavours to excel, because she can never be either silly or absurd, it does not follow that she should always be equally successful, or that all her productions should be interesting and amusing alike. Sometimes the subjects afford but little scope either for interest or amusement;—and sometimes the moral lessons she wishes to inculcate are of a sort which do not admit of those embellishments which are most suited to her genius.

The key, indeed, to all that is peculiar in her writings, whether in the way of excellence or defect,—that which distinguishes her from other writers of kindred powers of judgment and invention, is, that the duties of a *Moral Teacher* are always uppermost in her thoughts. It is impossible, we think, to read ten pages in any of her writings, without feeling, not only that the whole, but that every part of them, was intended to do good; —and that she has never for an instant allowed herself to forget, that the great end and aim of her writing was—not to display her own talents, or to court popularity by brilliant effect,—but to make her readers substantially better and happier;—not only to correct fatal errors of opinion—to soften dispositions and remove prejudices unfriendly to happiness—but to display wisdom and goodness at once in their most engaging and familiar aspects—to raise to their proper rank and importance those humbler virtues on which the felicity of ordinary life so essentially depends—and to show how easy and agreeable the loftiest principles and the highest intellectual attainments may be in practice, by representing them, as they are in truth most commonly to be found, united with the gayest temper, and the most simple and amiable manners.

No nobler or more worthy end certainly could be proposed to any human endeavours; and those who are best acquainted with Miss Edgeworth's writings will probably think most highly of her success in the pursuit of it: and yet it is to the unrelaxed intensity of this pursuit that we think almost all her faults are to be referred. It is this which has given to her compositions something of too didactic a manner,—and brought the moral of her stories too obtrusively forward,—and led her into repetitions that are somewhat wearisome, and discussions too elementary, and exaggerations too improbable,—that has lowered the tone, in short, of her infinitely varied and original fictions to some affinity with that of ingenious apologues invented for the instruction of youth, and given at times an air of childishness and poorness to the result of the finest observations, and the profoundest views of human nature. It is wonderful, indeed, to see such works produced, under the disadvantages and restraints of so severe a method. But it is impossible to doubt that much of the freedom, the grace, and the boldness of her invention has been sacrificed to the pithy illustration of some moral aphorism, or the importunate enforcement of some salutary truth.

Nor has the effect been merely to lessen the fame of the author, and the delight of her intelligent readers;—we suspect it has, in many cases, been also to defeat, in a considerable degree, the very end to which so much has been thus resolutely sacrificed. Persons of full age revolt from instruction presented in too direct and officious a form,—and take it amiss to have a plain lesson, however much needed, driven into them in so persevering and unrelenting a manner; and the very exaggerations and repetitions which

are intended to give force and effect to the warning, are apt to make it less impressive, by making it less probable. As they now stand, the greater part of her Tales may be regarded as a series or climax of instances, in which some moral or intellectual defect produces disastrous consequences—a continued succession of catastrophes, arising out of the same causes, and terminating in the same general results. In each of these stories, we have little more than an enlargement of a character conceived like one of La Bruyère's,—and illustrated by a similar train of extreme cases and striking exemplifications;—a method perfectly unexceptionable, when the object is merely to give a strong and distinct impression of the character itself, but liable to great objection when applied to a series of adventures that are meant to be probable, and to produce their moral effect by the suggestion of truth and reality. Some of the Tales, indeed, involve this defect, if it be one, in their very structure and conception—and announce it plainly enough in the titles which they bear. The best of these is that entitled "To-morrow:"—the worst "Murad the Unlucky." But in all which aim at a more extended delineation of life and manners, this limitation of the interest is both unnatural and unwise. No long series of interesting occurrences ever turned in reality upon one vice or folly, or presented us with one flaw of character as the spring and origin of all the disasters that ensue. Nor are the moral lessons, of which such occurrences may be made the vehicle, at all more likely to be effectual, from this exclusive attention to one only of the morbid propensities, of which we may be thus agreeably admonished. The systematic teacher of ethics may find it convenient to take the vices and virtues successively and apart, and to treat of each in its order—just as the systematic teacher of grammar takes the prepositions and conjunctions. But as, when the scholar is advanced into *practice*, all the parts of speech are jumbled again together, as in ordinary discourse; so, when the object is to give practical impressions, with a view to real life, it would seem expedient to exhibit all the mingled principles of action that are found actually to govern human conduct, or to affect human felicity:—and the most useful tale for improvement, as well as the most agreeable for unimprovable readers, must be that which presents us with the greatest variety of characters, and places before us the consequences of the greatest number of peculiar propensities. Upon Miss E.'s present system, there are several of her stories which can be of use, we should think, but to a very small number of patients; and we really cannot help thinking that it was as little worth her while to provide a corrective for gentlemen who have an antipathy to Jews, or ladies who have prejudices againt French governesses, as it would be for an eminent physician to compound an infallible plaster for scratches on the first joint of the little finger exclusively.

Her excessive care for the moral utility of her works, has also injured them in another way. The substantial happiness of life, no doubt, depends more upon justice and prudence, than upon genius and generosity—upon ordinary and attainable qualities, in short, than on lofty and heroic ones. But the interest we take in these as observers, is just in an opposite proportion; and Miss Edgeworth has been so fearful of misleading her readers into any unprofitable or dangerous admiration, that she has almost entirely excluded the agency of the higher passions, and applied all the resources of her genius to recommend the humbler practices of fair dealing and sincerity—industry, good temper, firmness of character, and friendly offices. She has accordingly recommended them most powerfully; and this age and the

next are largely indebted to her exertions, and will long profit by their effects;—but her writings would, beyond all question, have been more attractive if she had dealt occasionally in deeper and more tumultuous emotions, and exhibited her characters in situations more full of distress and agitation, and under the influence of feelings more vehement and overwhelming than she has generally thought it safe to meddle with. Except in the case of her Irish rustics, she has hardly ever ascribed any burst of natural passion, or any impulse of reckless generosity, to her characters. The rest of her favourites are all well behaved, considerate, good-natured people, who are never in any very terrible danger, either from within or from without, and from whom little more is required than might be expected from any other well-disposed and well-educated persons in the like circumstances.

The greater interest and attraction of stronger passion cannot, of course, be disputed; but we are a little sceptical here also, as to the supposed danger or inutility of such exhibitions. It is a great thing, certainly, to make a man wise for himself; but it is still greater, and not less important, to make him understand that there are feelings stronger than selfish feelings, and joys of more value than selfish enjoyments. One half of mankind is condemned to perpetual debasement, by never having been made to comprehend the delight of generosity, or the elevation of a devoted affection; and, to give them this sense, we must, in general, set before them some strong and even exaggerated representation of the reality. The occasions for such emotions are but of rare occurrence, indeed, in ordinary life; and the habits of mind that would render them common, would no doubt be pernicious if they were to become predominant. But there is no great danger of this practical result. Pupils in this, as in every other school, always lag behind their teachers, and fall far short of their patterns. A dancing-master turns out his toes more than enough, and holds himself ridiculously erect, that his disciples may do both moderately;—and examples of extravagant generosity, or imprudent affection, are likely to be imitated with the same abatements. It may often be necessary, by a strong impulse, to rouse the kinder and nobler feelings of our nature; but it can scarcely ever be requisite to suggest those selfish considerations by which they may be kept within bounds. In spite of our metaphysical moralists, we are firmly persuaded that our hearts are practically softened by being made to sympathize even with imaginary sorrow; and cannot help thinking, that the first tears which a pathetic and powerful writer draws from a rude nature, are pledges of its permanent refinement. The occasional appearance of lofty and energetic characters on the scenes of real life, is allowed to raise the general standard of sentiment in the age and nation to which they belong, even though they should trespass in many points upon the ordinary rules of prudence and morality, and present an assemblage of qualities which it would be by no means convenient to meet in our common acquaintance. Now, the heroes of fiction stand nearly in the same predicament, and perform nearly the same functions for their reader; and we are inclined to think, that the mischief they may do by the seducing example of their extravagance, is more than compensated by the force with which they rouse our sluggish sensibility, and the feelings they so nobly impress of a nobler use and a higher relish of life than can be found in its vulgar prosperity. In Miss Edgeworth, however, we meet with little that can be called heroic—and nothing that is romantic or poetical. She is so much

afraid of seducing her pupils from the practical duties of social life, that she will not even borrow a grace from the loveliness of nature; and has neither expressed herself, nor exemplified in any of her characters, that sympathy with rural beauty, that sense of the expression of the great or majestic features of the universe, of which the author of Waverley and the Antiquary has made so admirable an use, and turned to such account even for the moral effect of his story. There is more of this feeling in one speech of Edie Ochiltree, than in all the works of the author now before us.

Since we have begun to notice her faults, we may as well make an end of them. Those of which we have now spoken, we ascribe to her system. —her rigid rejection of every thing that does not teach a safe and practical moral lesson. There are others which we should be disposed to refer to her sex. With all her sound sense and intelligence, it is plain that she is not at all at home in the representation of public transactions, or the actual business of men. She is not only incapable of dealing with battles and negotiations, like the great author to whom we have just alluded; but has evidently no more than a derivative and conjectural knowledge of the way in which political intrigues, and private and public business, are actually managed. She understands well enough how politicians speak in the drawing-room, and in what way their habits of business affect their manners in society; but her conceptions of the tone and temper of their actual conduct are plainly derived from conjecture alone, and often bear no very near resemblance to the reality. She has an unlucky fondness, too, for showing her acquaintance with the profession of the law, and repeatedly goes out of her way to describe as feats of great legal dexterity and acuteness, things quite puerile or impossible. The influence of sex, too, has narrowed the field of her invention in other particulars,—where this limitation is less perhaps to be regretted;—female Delicacy has prevented her from completing in all their parts those pictures of personal profligacy, and its consequences, which the nature of her moral design leads her so often to portray; and female Gentleness has disabled her from representing, and perhaps from conceiving, the extent of brutal ferocity of which man's nature is capable, and from which, as well as from other vices, it requires not unfrequently to be warned.

It is perhaps invidious to mention other faults,—especially as we have nothing else to ascribe them to but the ordinary imperfections of human nature. But we must venture to tell Miss E., that most of her amiable young ladies are a little too wise and peremptory—and are apt, in their repartees, to be rather pert than dignified. Indeed, we cannot say we exceedingly relish her smart sayings in general,—which are sometimes neither very new nor very elegant. There are also some glaring improbabilities hazarded now and then, to bring about her catastrophes—a fault that is rendered particularly striking by the sober, familiar, and authentic air of most of her narratives. Where the general strain of the fable is romantic and extravagant, a little excess in the marvellous does not startle or offend; but we feel it at once as a capital defect, where the great charm of the work consists in the truth and accuracy of its representations, and in that chaste and judicious invention which enables us to go along with the story without any violent suppositions, or any great effort of forgetfulness as to the realities of the world we live in.

Having said so much of the faults of this distinguished writer, it is scarcely necessary perhaps to add, that they are almost entirely effaced by her ex-

cellences:—nor, after what we have so often stated with regard to her, can it be requisite to say in what we think these excellences consist. Her admirable sense—her kindness of heart—her marvellous powers of invention, that make it difficult to discover a single plagiarism, even from herself, in the forty volumes of her works—the inimitable humour, truth, and beauty of her traits of national character, displaying not only a thorough knowledge, but an affectionate love of Ireland, and a concern for her happiness, which cannot be for ever unfruitful—her intimate acquaintance and generous sympathy with the feelings and habits of the lower and middling classes of the people—her clear, indulgent, and rational views of the diversity of human character and its causes—and the rapidity, accuracy, and brevity of her sketches of all its variations;—these are among the most prominent of her merits, and would be alone sufficient to place her among the most meritorious writers of the age she was destined to improve. *

MADAME DE STAEL.†

When we say, that Madame de Staël is decidedly the most eminent literary female of her age, we do not mean to deny that there may be others whose writings are of more direct and indisputable utility—who are distinguished by greater justness and sobriety of thinking, and may pretend to have conferred more practical benefits on the existing generation. But it is impossible, we think, to deny, that she has pursued a more lofty as well as a more dangerous career;—that she has treated of subjects of far greater difficulty, and far more extensive interest, and even in her failures has frequently given indication of greater powers than have sufficed for the success of her more prudent contemporaries. While other female writers have contented themselves, for the most part, with embellishing or explaining the truths which the more robust intellect of the other sex had previously established,—in making knowledge more familiar, or virtue more engaging,—or, at most, in multiplying the finer distinctions which may be detected about the boundaries of taste or of morality,—and in illustrating the importance of the minor virtues to the general happiness of life,—this distinguished person has not only aimed at extending the boundaries of knowledge, and rectifying the errors of received opinions upon subjects of the greatest importance, but has uniformly applied herself to trace out the operation of general causes, and by combining the past with the present, and

* Miss Edgeworth has reason to feel proud of the honours she has received. Her valuable productions have been impartially reviewed and cordially appreciated by Critics maintaining opposite opinions on almost every other topic connected with Literature and Politics. Her reputation as a woman of commanding talent, extensive information, and sound principles, has escaped those savage and unmanly attacks which some of our literary censors, in the envenomed spirit of party, have levelled at the characters and fame of other female writers not less distinguished for their genius and acquirements. The *Quarterly Review*, notwithstanding its implacable antipathy to *Lady Morgan*, has done ample justice to the merits of Miss Edgeworth. The *critique* on "Patronage," in the 20th Number of January, 1814, is a just and splendid tribute of praise to one of the most useful and agreeable authors of the age. The Edinburgh Reviewers have, much to their credit, availed themselves of every opportunity of acknowledging the excellence and utility of her works See Vol. ii. page 398. Vol. iv. page 329. Vol. viii. page 206. Vol. xiv. page 375. Vol. xx. page 100. Vol. xxii. page 416. Vol. xxxiv. page 121. Vol. li. page 447.—See also Appendix, No. II, at the end of this volume.

† Madame de Staël—Sur la Littérature.—Vol. xxi. page 1. 1813; and Vol. xxx. page 275. September, 1818.

pointing out the connexion and reciprocal action of all co-existent phenomena, to develop the harmonious system which actually prevails in the apparent chaos of human affairs; and to gain something like an assurance as to the complexion of that futurity towards which our thoughts are so anxiously driven, by the selfish as well as the generous principles of our nature.

We are not acquainted, indeed, with any writer who has made such bold and vigorous attempts to carry the generalizing spirit of true philosophy into the history of literature and manners, or who has thrown so strong a light upon the capricious and apparently unaccountable diversity of national taste, genius, and morality, by connecting them with the political structure of society, the accidents of climate and external relation, and the variety of creeds and superstitions. In her lighter works, this spirit is indicated chiefly by the force and comprehensiveness of those general observations with which they abound; and which strike at once, by their justness and novelty, and by the great extent of their application. They prove also in how remarkable a degree she possesses the rare talent of embodying in one luminous position those sentiments and impressions which float unquestioned and undefined over many an understanding, and give a colour to the character, and a bias to the conduct of multitudes, who are not so much as aware of their existence. Besides all this, her Novels bear testimony to the extraordinary accuracy and minuteness of her observation of human character, and to her thorough knowledge of those dark and secret workings of the heart, by which misery is so often elaborated from the pure elements of the affections. Her knowledge, however, we must say, seems to be more of evil than of good. The predominating sentiment in her fictions is, despair of human happiness and human virtue; and their interest is founded almost entirely on the inherent and almost inevitable heartlessness of polished man. The impression which they leave upon the mind, therefore, though powerfully pathetic, is both painful and humiliating; at the same time that it proceeds, we are inclined to believe, upon the double error of supposing that the bulk of intelligent people are as selfish as those victims of fashion and philosophy from whom her characters are selected; and that a sensibility to unkindness can survive the extinction of all kindly emotions.

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We cannot stop now to say all that we think of Madame de Staël:—and yet we must say, that we think her the most powerful writer that her country has produced since the time of Voltaire and Rousseau—and the greatest writer, of a woman, that any time or any country has produced. Her taste, perhaps, is not quite pure; and her style is too irregular and ambitious. These faults may even go deeper. Her passion for *effect*, and the tone of exaggeration which it naturally produces, have probably interfered occasionally with the soundness of her judgment, and given a suspicious colouring to some of her representations of fact. At all events, they have rendered her impatient of the humbler task of completing her explanatory details, or stating in their order all the premises of her reasonings. She gives her history in abstracts, and her theories in aphorisms:—and the greater part of her works, instead of presenting that systematic unity from which the highest degrees of strength and beauty and clearness must ever be derived, may be fairly described as a collection of striking fragments—in which a great deal of repetition does by no means diminish the effect of *a good* deal of inconsistency. In these same works, however, whether we

consider them as fragments or as systems, we do not hesitate to say that there are more original and profound observations—more new images—greater sagacity combined with higher imagination—and more of the true philosophy of the passions, the politics, and the literature of her contemporaries—than in any other author we can now remember. She has great eloquence on all subjects; and a singular pathos in representing those bitterest agonies of the spirit in which wretchedness is aggravated by remorse, or by regrets that partake of its character. Though it is difficult to resist her when she is in earnest, we cannot say that we agree in all her opinions, or approve of all her sentiments. She overrates the importance of Literature, either in determining the character or affecting the happiness of mankind; and she theorizes too confidently on its past and its future history. On subjects like this, we have not yet facts enough for so much philosophy; and must be contented, we fear, for a long time to come, to call many things accidental, which it would be more satisfactory to refer to determinate causes. In her estimate of the happiness, and her notions of the wisdom of private life, we think her both unfortunate and erroneous. She makes passions and high sensibilities a great deal too indispensable; and varnishes over all her pictures too uniformly with the glare of an extravagant or affected enthusiasm. She represents men, in short, as a great deal more unhappy, more depraved, and more energetic than they are—and seems to respect them the more for it. In her politics she is far more unexceptionable. She is everywhere the warm friend and animated advocate of liberty—and of liberal, practical, and philanthropic principles. On these subjects we cannot blame her enthusiasm, which has nothing in it vindictive or provoking; and are far more inclined to envy than to reprove that sanguine and buoyant temper of mind which, after all she has seen and suffered, still leads her to overrate, in our apprehension, both the merit of past attempts at political amelioration, and the chances of their success hereafter. It is in that futurity, we fear, and in the hopes that make it present, that the lovers of mankind must yet, for a while, console themselves for the disappointments which still seem to beset them. If Madame de Staël, however, predicts with too much confidence, it must be admitted that her labours have a powerful tendency to realize her predictions. Her writings are all full of the most animating views of the improvement of our social condition, and the means by which it may be effected—the most striking refutations of prevailing errors on these great subjects—and the most persuasive expostulations with those who may think their interest or their honour concerned in maintaining them. Even they who are the least inclined to agree with her, must admit, that there is much to be learned from her writings; and we can give them no higher praise than to say, that their tendency is not only to promote the interests of philanthropy and independence, but to soften, rather than exasperate, the prejudices to which they are opposed. *

* Madame de Stael's other Works are reviewed in Vol. ii. page 172. Vol. xi. page 183. Vol. xxi. page 424. Vol. xxii. page 198.

WASHINGTON IRVING.*

The great charm and peculiarity of this work consists now, as on former occasions, in the singular sweetness of the composition, and the mildness of the sentiments,—sicklied over perhaps a little, now and then, with that cloying heaviness into which unvaried sweetness is so apt to subside. The rhythm and melody of the sentences is certainly excessive: as it not only gives an air of mannerism from its uniformity, but raises too strong an impression of the labour that must have been bestowed, and the importance which must have been attached to that which is, after all, but a secondary attribute to good writing. It is very ill-natured in us, however, to object to what has given us so much pleasure; for we happen to be very intense and sensitive admirers of those soft harmonies of studied speech in which this author is so apt to indulge himself; and have caught ourselves, oftener than we shall confess, neglecting his excellent matter, to lap ourselves in the liquid music of his periods—and letting ourselves float passively down the mellow falls and windings of his soft-flowing sentences, with a delight not inferior to that which we derive from fine versification.

We should reproach ourselves still more, however, and with better reason, if we were to persist in the objection which we were at first inclined to make to the extraordinary kindliness and disarming gentleness of all this author's views and suggestions; and we only refer to it now, for the purpose of answering and discrediting it, with any of our readers to whom also it may happen to have occurred.

It first struck us as an objection to the author's courage and sincerity. It was quite unnatural, we said to ourselves, for any body to be always on such very amiable terms with his fellow-creatures; and this air of eternal philanthropy was nothing but a pretence, put on to bring himself into favour; and then we proceeded to assimilate him to those silken parasites who are in raptures with every body they meet, and ingratiate themselves in general society by an unmanly suppression of all honest indignation, and a timid avoidance of all subjects of disagreement. Upon due consideration, however, we are now satisfied that this was an unjust and unworthy interpretation. An author who comes deliberately before the public with certain select monologues of doctrine and discussion, is not at all in the condition of a man in common society, on whom various overtures of baseness and folly are daily obtruded, and to whose sense and honour appeals are perpetually made, which must be manfully answered, as honour and conscience suggest. The author, on the other hand, has no questions to answer, and no society to select: his professed object is to instruct and improve the world—and his real one, if he is tolerably honest, is nothing worse than to promote his own fame and fortune by succeeding in what he professes. Now, there are but two ways that we have ever heard of by which men may be improved—either by cultivating and encouraging their amiable propensities, or by shaming and frightening them out of those that are vicious; and there can be but little doubt, we should imagine, which of the two offices is the highest and most eligible—since the one is left in a great measure to Hell and the hangman,—and for the other, we are taught chiefly to look to Heaven, and all that is angelic upon earth. The most perfect moral dis-

* Bracebridge Hall, or the Humorists; by Geoffrey Crayon.—Vol. xxxvii. page 337. November, 1822.

cipline would be that, no doubt, in which both were combined; but one is generally as much as human energy is equal to; and in fact, they have commonly been divided in practice, without surmise of blame. And truly, if men have been hailed as public benefactors, merely for having beat tyrants into moderation, or coxcombs into good manners, we must be permitted to think, that one whose vocation is different may be allowed to have deserved well of his kind, although he should have confined his efforts to teaching them mutual charity and forbearance, and only sought to repress their evil passions, by strengthening the springs and enlarging the sphere of those that are generous and kindly.

The objection in this general form, therefore, we soon found could not be maintained:—but, as we still felt a little secret spite lingering within us, at our author's universal affability, we set about questioning ourselves more strictly as to its true nature and tendency; and think we at last succeeded in tracing it to an eager desire to see so powerful a pen and such great popularity employed in demolishing those errors and abuses to which we had been accustomed to refer most of the unhappiness of our country. Though we love his gentleness and urbanity, on the whole, we should have been very well pleased to see him rude and surly to our particular opponents; and could not but think it showed a want of spirit and discrimination that he did not mark his sense of their demerits, by making them an exception to his general system of toleration and indulgence. Being Whigs ourselves, for example, we could not but take it a little amiss, that one born and bred a republican, and writing largely on the present condition of England, should make so little distinction between that party and its opponents—and should even choose to attach himself to a Tory family, as the proper type and emblem of the old English character. Nor could we well acquit him of being "pigeon-livered—and lacking gall," when we found that nothing could provoke him to give a palpable hit to the Ministry, or even to employ his pure and powerful eloquence in reproving the shameful scurrilities of the ministerial press. We were also a little sore, we believe, on discovering that he took no notice of Scotland, and said absolutely nothing about our Highlanders, our schools, and our poetry.

Now, though we have magnanimously chosen to illustrate this grudge at his neutrality in our own persons, it is obvious that a dissatisfaction of the same kind must have been felt by all the other great and contending parties into which this and all free countries are necessarily divided. Mr. Crayon has rejected the alliance of any one of these, and resolutely refused to take part with them in the struggles to which they attach so much importance; and consequently has, to a certain extent, offended and disappointed them all. But we must carry our magnanimity a step farther, and confess, for ourselves, and for others, that, upon reflection, the offence and disappointment seem to us altogether unreasonable and unjust. The ground of complaint is, that we see talents and influence—innocently, we must admit, and even beneficially employed—but not engaged on our side, or in the particular contest which we may feel it our duty to wage against the errors or delusions of our contemporaries. Now, in the first place, is not this something like the noble indignation of a recruiting serjeant, who thinks it a scandal that any stout fellow should degrade himself by a pacific employment, and takes offence accordingly at every pair of broad shoulders and good legs which he finds in the possession of a priest or a tradesman? But

the manifest absurdity of the grudge consists in this. 1*st*, That it is equally reasonable in all the different parties who sincerely believe their own cause to be that which ought to prevail; while it is manifest, that, as the desired champion could only side with one, all the rest could be only worse off by the termination of his neutrality; and 2*dly*, That the weight and authority, for the sake of which his assistance is so coveted, and which each party is so anxious to have thrown into its scale, having been entirely created by virtues and qualities which belong only to a state of neutrality, are, in reality, incapable of being transferred to contending parties, and must utterly perish and be annihilated in the attempt. A good part of Mr. C.'s reputation, and certainly a very large share of his influence and popularity with all parties, has been acquired by the indulgence with which he has treated all, and his abstinence from all sorts of virulence and hostility; and it is no doubt chiefly on account of this influence and favour that we and others are rashly desirous to see him take part against our adversaries—forgetting that those very qualities which render his assistance valuable, would infallibly desert him the moment that he complied with our desire, and vanish in the very act of his compliance.

The question then comes to be, not merely whether there should be any neutrals in great national contentions—but whether any man should be allowed to aspire to distinction by acts not subservient to party purposes?—a question which, even in this age of party and polemics, we suppose there are not many who would have the hardihood seriously to propound. Yet *this*, we must be permitted to repeat, *is* truly the question; for if a man may lawfully devote his talents to music, or architecture, or drawing, or metaphysics, or poetry, and lawfully challenge the *general* admiration of his age for his proficiency in these pursuits, though totally disjoined from all political application, we really do not see why he may not write prose essays on national character and the ingredients of private happiness, with the same large and pacific purposes of pleasure and improvement. To Mr. C. especially, who is not a citizen of this country, it can scarcely be proposed as a duty to take a share in our internal contentions; and though the picture which he professes to give of our country may be more imperfect, and the estimate he makes of our character less complete, from the omission of this less tractable element, the value of the parts that he has executed will not be lessened, and the beneficial effect of the representation will in all probability be increased. For our own parts, we have ventured, on former occasions, to express our doubts whether the polemical parts, even of a statesman's duty, do not hold too high a place in public esteem—and are sure, at all events, that they ought not to engross the attention of those to whom that duty has not been entrusted. It should never be forgotten, that good political institutions, the sole end and object of all our party contentions, are only valuable as means of promoting the general happiness and virtue of individuals;—and that, important as they are, there are other means, still more direct and indispensable for the attainment of that great end. The cultivation of the kind affections, we humbly conceive, is of still more importance to private happiness than the good balance of the constitution under which we live; and, if it be true, as we most firmly believe, that it is the natural effect of political freedom to fit and dispose the mind for all gentle as well as generous emotions, we hold it to be equally true that habits of benevolence, and sentiments of philanthropy, are the surest foundations *on which a love* of liberty can rest. A man must love his fellows before he

loves their liberty; and if he has not learned to interest himself in their enjoyments, it is impossible that he can have any genuine concern for that liberty, which, after all, is only a means of enjoyment. We consider, therefore, the writers who seek to soften and improve our social affections, not only as aiming *directly* at the same great end which politicians more circuitously pursue, but as preparing those elements out of which alone a generous and enlightened love of political freedom can ever be formed—and without which it could neither be safely trusted in the hands of individuals, nor prove fruitful of individual enjoyment. We conclude, therefore, that Mr. Crayon is in reality a better friend to Whig principles than if he had openly attacked the Tories—and end this long, and perhaps needless, apology for his neutrality, by discovering, that such neutrality is in effect the best nursery for partisans of all that can be shown to be clearly and unquestionably right.

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On the whole, we are very sorry to receive Mr. Crayon's farewell—and we return it with the utmost cordiality. We thank him most sincerely, for the pleasure he has given us—for the kindness he has shown to our country—and for the lessons he has taught, both here and in his native land, of good taste, good nature, and national liberality. We hope he will come back among us soon—and remember us while he is away; and can assure him, that he is in no danger of being speedily forgotten.*

HAZLITT.†

If Mr. Hazlitt has not generally met with impartial justice from his contemporaries, we must say that he has himself partly to blame. Some of the attacks of which he has been the object, have no doubt been purely brutal and malignant; but others have, in a great measure, arisen from feelings, of which he has himself set the example. His seeming carelessness of that public opinion which he would influence—his love of startling paradoxes—and his intrusion of political virulence, at seasons when the mind is prepared only for the delicate investigations of taste, have naturally provoked a good deal of asperity, and prevented the due appreciation of his powers. We shall strive, however, to divest ourselves of all prepossessions, and calmly to estimate those talents and feelings which he has here brought to the contemplation of such beauty and grandeur, as none of the low passions of this "ignorant present time" should ever be permitted to overcloud.

Those who regard Mr. Hazlitt as an ordinary writer, have little right to accuse him of suffering antipathies in philosophy or politics to influence his critical decisions. He possesses one noble quality at least for the office which he has chosen, in the intense admiration and love which he feels for the great authors on whose excellences he chiefly dwells. His relish for their beauties is so keen, that while he describes them, the pleasures which they impart become almost palpable to the sense; and we seem, scarcely

* See a Review of Washington Irving's Sketch Book, Vol. xxxiv. page 160; and of his Life of Columbus, Vol. xlviii. page 1.

† Hazlitt's Lectures on the Drama.—Vol. xxxiv. page 438. November, 1820.

in a figure, to feast and banquet on their "nectar'd sweets." He introduces us almost corporally into the divine presence of the Great of old time—enables us to hear the living oracles of wisdom drop from their lips—and makes us partakers, not only of those joys which they diffused, but of those which they felt in the inmost recesses of their souls. He draws aside the veil of Time with a hand tremulous with mingled delight and reverence; and descants, with kindling enthusiasm, on all the delicacies of that picture of genius which he discloses. His intense admiration of intellectual beauty seems always to sharpen his critical faculties. He perceives it, by a kind of intuitive power, how deeply soever it may be buried in rubbish; and separates it, in a moment, from all that would encumber or deface it. At the same time, he exhibits to us those hidden sources of beauty, not like an anatomist, but like a lover. He does not coolly dissect the form to show the springs whence the blood flows all eloquent, and the divine expression is kindled; but makes us feel it in the sparkling or softened eye, the wreathed smile, and the tender bloom. In a word, he at once analyzes and describes,—so that our enjoyments of loveliness are not chilled, but brightened, by our acquaintance with their inward sources. The knowledge communicated in his Lectures, breaks no sweet enchantment, nor chills one feeling of youthful joy. His Criticisms, while they extend our insight into the causes of poetical excellence, teach us, at the same time, more keenly to enjoy, and more fondly to revere it.

It must seem, at first sight, strange, that powers like these should have failed to excite universal sympathy. Much, doubtless, of the coldness and misrepresentation cast on them has arisen from causes at which we have already hinted—from the apparent readiness of the author to "give up to party what was meant for mankind"—and from the occasional breaking in of personal animosities on that deep harmony which should attend the reverent contemplation of genius. But we apprehend that there are other causes which have diminished the influence of Mr. Hazlitt's faculties, originating in his mind itself;—and these we shall endeavour briefly to specify.

The chief of these may, we think, be ascribed primarily to the want of proportion, of arrangement, and of harmony in his powers. His mind resembles the "rich stronde" which Spenser has so nobly described, and to which he has himself likened the age of Elizabeth, where treasures of every description lie, without order, in inexhaustible profusion. Noble masses of exquisite marble are there, which might be fashioned to support a glorious temple; and gems of peerless lustre, which would adorn the holiest shrine. He has no lack of the deepest feelings, the profoundest sentiments of humanity, or the loftiest aspirations after ideal good. But there are no great leading principles of taste to give singleness to his aims, nor any central points in his mind, around which his feelings may revolve, and his imaginations cluster. There is no sufficient distinction between his intellectual and his imaginative faculties. He confounds the truths of imagination with those of fact—the processes of argument with those of feeling—the immunities of intellect with those of virtue. Hence the seeming inconsistency of many of his doctrines. Hence the want of all continuity in his style. Hence his failure in producing one single, harmonious, and lasting impression on the hearts of his hearers. He never waits to consider whether a sentiment or an image is in place—so it be in itself striking. *That keen sense* of pleasure in intellectual beauty which is the best charm

of his writings, is also his chief deluder. He cannot resist a powerful image, an exquisite quotation, or a pregnant remark, however it may dissipate or even subvert the general feeling which his theme should inspire. Thus, on one occasion, in the midst of a violent political invective, he represents the objects of his scorn as "having been beguiled, like Miss Clarissa Harlowe, into a house of ill-fame, and, like her, defending themselves to the last;—as if the reader's whole current of feeling would not be diverted from all political disputes, by the remembrance thus awakened of one of the sublimest scenes of romance ever embodied by human power. He will never be contented to touch that most strange and curious instrument, the human heart, with a steady aim, but throws his hand rapidly over the chords, mingling strange discord with "most eloquent music." Instead of conducting us onward to a given object, he opens so many delicious prospects by the way-side, and suffers us to gaze at them so long, that we forget the end of our journey. He is perpetually dazzled among the sunbeams of his fancy, and plays with them in elegant fantasy, when he should point them to the spots where they might fall on truth and beauty, and render them visible by a clearer and lovelier radiance than had yet revealed them.

The work before us is not the best verification of these remarks; for it has more of continuity and less of paradox than any of his previous writings. With the exception of some strong political allusions in the account of the Sejanus of Ben Jonson, it is entirely free from those expressions of party feeling which respect for an audience, consisting of men of all parties, and men of no party, ought always to restrain. There is also none of that personal bitterness towards Messrs. Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, which disfigured his former lectures. His hostility towards these poets, the associates of his early days, has always indeed been mingled with some redeeming feelings, which have heightened the regret occasioned by its public disclosure. While he has pursued them with all possible severity of invective, and acuteness of sarcasm, he has protected their intellectual character with a chivalrous zeal. He has spoken, as "if his only hate sprung from his only love;" and his thoughts of its objects, deep-rooted in old affection, could not lose all traces of their "primal sympathy." His bitterest language has had its dash of the early sweets, which no changes of opinion could entirely destroy. Still his audiences and his readers had ample ground of complaint for the intrusion of personal feelings in inquiries which should be sacred from all discordant emotions. We rejoice to observe that this blemish is now effaced; and that full and free course is at last given to that deep humanity which has ever held its current in his productions, sometimes in open day, and sometimes beneath the soil which it fertilized, though occasionally dashed and thrown back in its course by the obstacles of prejudice and of passion.

While we sympathize in all Mr. Hazlitt's sentiments of reverence for the mighty works of the olden time, we must guard against that exclusive admiration of antiquity, rendered fashionable by some great critics, which would induce the belief, that the age of genius is past, and the world grown too old to be romantic. We can observe in these Lectures, and in other works of their author, a jealousy of the advances of civilization, as lessening the dominion of fancy. But this is, we think, a dangerous error; tending to chill the earliest aspirations after excellence, and to roll its rising energies back on the kindling

soul. There remains yet abundant space for genius to possess; and science is rather the pioneer than the impeder of its progress. The level roads, indeed, which it cuts through unexplored regions, are, in themselves, less fitted for its wanderings than the tangled ways through which it delights to stray; but they afford it new glimpses into the wild scenes and noble vistas which open near them, and enable it to deviate into fresh scenes of beauty, and hitherto unexplored fastnesses. The face of Nature changes not with the variations of fashion. One state of society may be somewhat more favourable to the development of genius than another; but wherever its divine seed is cast, there will it strike its roots, far beneath the surface of artificial life, and rear its branches into the heavens, far above the busy haunts of common mortals.*

* See Vol. xliii. page 264.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

GENIUS AND ELOQUENCE OF MR. PITT.

)r a Notice of the masterly Article in the Quarterly Review from which the following Extracts are taken, the Reader is referred to page 304.

THE mental constitution of Mr. Pitt appears to us to have been one of the most nearly :rfect ever bestowed on a human being. His powers of intellect are generally al-wed to have been of the highest order ; and he was equally rich in those more prac-:al qualifications which alone can render intellect of avail in the actual conduct of fairs.

It is interesting to observe the characteristic varieties of manner which mere diffe-nces of temper, habits, and disposition impress on human genius. On the theatre of ıblic life, it is by modes infinitely diversified that great men of nearly equal talents :hieve a nearly equal degree of greatness. Some, ordinarily indolent or negligent, yet 'eak out in starts and sallies of fortunate boldness, and may thus be said to absolve .eir race of glory by a series of gigantic but irregular bounds. Others, uniformly 'dent and impetuous, are apt by their vehemence to overreach their own purposes; ıt finally succeed in bearing down all opposition. A third class, coldly cautious and lently persevering, appear to weary out the jealousy of fortune by their unremitting gilance and unconquerable patience. A fourth set are distinguished by an infinite :licacy both of perception and of management ;—by a sensibility which is aware of ıe most latent dangers, and a nicety of hand that can unravel the most perplexing dif-culties. There are persons, yet distinct from all these, who make their way by a cer-ın homely good sense and plodding vigour, which is little alive to wire-drawn scruples, ıd cuts without ceremony the knots that it cannot untie. To enumerate the subdi-isions into which these several descriptions of characters respectively branch forth, or ıe compounds formed by their partial intermixture, would be endless. The character ' Mr. Pitt, however, if we have not greatly mistaken it, collected in itself the better)rtion of them all. It would be difficult, we believe, to discover in all the records of story the name of any other individual, who to so much alacrity and active courage has ined more constancy and equability; who has exhibited the same strenuousness and 'enness of spirit, with so little of bustling and boisterousness on the one hand, or of ecipitancy on the other; who has possessed the same soundness of mind and practical nse, untinctured by the smallest infusion of coarseness or vulgarity; and whose refine-ent, at the same time, has been equally free from all nervousness, hesitation, and 'itability.

In the assemblage of qualities which we have attributed to Mr. Pitt, it will be observed ıt the component features are of very various cast and character; yet it is curious to nark that, when such a combination is once formed, the resulting expression of the ıole will naturally be one rather of grandeur and loftiness than of sweetness and ame-y. It is thus that the mixture of the prismatic colours, instead of constituting, as ght have been expected, a medium between the brilliancy of some of them and the soft-ss of others, issues in one dazzling effulgence of white. However we may account this physical wonder, the mental phenomenon is by no means hard of explanation.

A mind comprising an union of all the highest faculties, mutually adjusted with the most correct symmetry, too little resembles minds in general to be secure of exciting general sympathy; and, if not our firmest or deepest, yet our fondest attachments will rather incline to objects whose greatness either is qualified by some manifest imperfection, or at least occasionally deviates into excess. It is only a disproportion of the ingredient hues that can produce the prevalence of that *soft green* on which the soul has been justly and beautifully described as loving to repose. Yet let us not therefore be imagined to maintain that the majestic description of mind which we have attempted to picture is ill calculated to attract popularity. Of such a position, the actual history of Mr. Pitt would singly furnish a sufficient disproof. So far, indeed, from holding this opinion, we are persuaded that the character in question is the natural centre of that species of popularity, at which alone a leader of the public counsels should aim, because on no other can he rely,—the popularity into which the elements of veneration and confidence are deeply infused. Whatever of fraternal regard mankind may withhold from such a character, they will more than repay to it in filial respect. It would be perfectly erroneous to suppose that the reverence which we yield to an individual thus gifted is the mere homage of the judgment, and dictated rather by our reason than by our nature. The reverse is the fact. Much has often been said of the *besoin d'aimer*, as of a feeling natural to man; but the truth is, that to man, in a poetical capacity at least, the *besoin d'obéir* is a feeling in every respect equally natural. The human mind is rarely of so firm a contexture as, on matters of moment, to think independently; men lean on each other, and the community collectively on a few vigorous and self-supported spirits. These may be said to form the *piles* of the social fabric, and the rest consists by grappling and contiguation. Nor must this remark be explained as referring to the case of a despotic government; for, on the contrary, the peculiar feeling of subjection here described is, under a despotism, anticipated and overborne, and can have scope to operate only where restrictions of a merely physical kind are very sparingly imposed. It is to this sentiment, then, that the political leader must look, as to the true *seminary* of popular attachment. He who fills this void in the hearts of a people, possesses precisely that hold on their favour which is best adapted to the reciprocal relations subsisting between a statesman and his country.

It will be remembered, that the question here agitated has exclusively respected the *public* character of Mr. Pitt. The private friends and associates of men possess means of estimating the degree of their amiableness, from which the world is unavoidably precluded; and it is, therefore. perfectly conceivable that a mind which appears awful in its state-robes, shall, in its undress, be of all others the most engaging and delightful. In fact, it is now perfectly well known that this was actually the case with the statesman of whom we are speaking. Mr. Gifford has justly remarked, that "no man was ever more beloved by his friends, or inspired those who had the happiness of living in his society with a more sincere and affectionate attachment." On this pleasing quality of Mr. Pitt's character it would much gratify us to dwell; but our space is circumscribed, and we have now barely left ourselves room to subjoin our promised observations on his style and powers as an orator.

The eloquence of Mr. Pitt, with great beauties, had, like all the other eloquence of these latter days, great faults. It had not, however, the fault, which is sometimes imputed to it, of a deficiency in large and philosophical speculation. In this sort of excursion, though it dealt sparingly, it could with no propriety be called *deficient*, for it dealt enough. Mr. Pitt's speeches exhibited fewer ostensible references to general principles than, perhaps, might satisfy a hearer who was very metaphysically disposed; but, as the objections which they have drawn on themselves from such persons have not been sanctioned by the feelings, in general, of the audience to whom they were addressed, so we feel pretty well persuaded that they will not be echoed by posterity.

The objectors appear to forget that oratorical, like poetic composition, is, in its very nature, not philosophical, but popular. The object of both is to *affect strongly*; and no critical precept can be more universally familiar, or more deeply founded on human nature, than this, that the mind is strongly affected only by *near* and *individual* representations. The abstract theorems and generic conclusions of the metaphysician are *destructive of that* warm interest, that feeling of intimate concern, that *sense*, as it were,

of home, which it should be the business of the orator to excite. They call forth no passion: they produce nothing that can be called even an *affection* of the mind, unless it be something like that tranquil and indolent pensiveness, with which the deities of ancient poetry

——"From heaven survey the fatal strife,
And mourn the miseries of mortal life." *

They present us with a bird's-eye picture, in which distance, while it adds a certain faint and tender tint, mellowing down and blending together the whole expanse of prospect, almost entirely extinguishes that rich and varied vivacity of colours by which the ocular spectrum is alternately stimulated and refreshed.

In what precise degree philosophical discussion may enter into a popular oration there can be no occasion to consider, so long as we recollect that, being in its very nature extraneous, it can hardly appear too little. Nor is it, therefore, intended to question the doctrine that an orator must build his reasonings on a solid basis of general principles.

He must undoubtedly so build, if he would not have his edifice overthrown by the first blast; but it is not the less important that this basis should be concealed from sight.

The structure of his composition must be reared on the most massy foundations, while, in semblance, it is self poised and pensile. His oratory must, throughout, be governed by an enlarged philosophy, but a philosophy which, though hidden from sense, is yet (we make the allusion with reference) distinctly visible in its effects.

Such is the general rule. But all oratory is a compromise between theoretical perfection and prevailing prejudices; and he who addresses an assembly of metaphysicians must condescend to be, in some measure, metaphysical. Even thus tried, however, Mr. Pitt will not be found wanting. Although those who constitute our parliamentary auditories set too little value on *impassioned* eloquence, yet that they are, generally speaking, inclined to *philosophising* eloquence does not follow, and must seem very dubious.

But whatever their inclination, that Mr. Pitt contrived, if not to satisfy, at least to quiet it, may be inferred from the fact of his popularity as a speaker, which unquestionably equalled, and, indeed, as far as our observation extended, surpassed, that of any of his contemporaries. On the other hand, if the matter be brought to the test of authority, this orator will be equally borne out. Of philosophy, technically so called, there is scarcely more in Cicero and Demosthenes than in Homer; and certainly, on this score, they would be found at least as lamentably deficient as Mr. Pitt.

"Ut redeant veteres, Ciceroni nemo ducentos
Nunc deterit nummos!"—

Were those masters of eloquence to re-appear on earth, it cannot be doubted that some of our little philosophists, who cant about *things in general*, only because they are profoundly ignorant of things in particular, would find it necessary to read them lectures on the science of generalisation, and would exhort them to substitute the paltry retorts and digesters of a metaphysical laboratory for those *inimitable* bolts which, fulmined over the civilised world, and shook even the centre of barbarism.

What then, it may be enquired, were, in our opinion, the real faults of Mr. Pitt as a speaker? The faults of Mr. Pitt as a speaker we certainly should pronounce to be those which have been described in the former part of this article, as characteristic of the British orators of his age, though, at the same time, as chargeable rather on the age than on the orators. But we have too great a respect for our readers to re-conduct them over a ground which we have already attempted so fully to explore. It may, perhaps, farther be remarked, that Mr. Pitt occasionally offended by monotony; and although, for the general diffuseness of his style, a very satisfactory and even triumphant plea is offered in the passage which we last extracted from Mr. Gifford, yet we are inclined to think that, in his statements at least, he sometimes exceeded the necessary measure of amplification. These, however, were trivial blemishes, and do not demand from criticism more than a bare notice. We shall therefore close, in this place, our censures of

* Dryden's Æneid.

this eminent master of eloquence, and direct our attention to the qualifications which entitled him to that appellation.

The *seat of the soul* in the human frame has been an object of anxious but fruitless search to philosophers; and, with little less labour and scarcely greater success, have physiognomists endeavoured to detect the *seat of expression* in the human face. In the mean time, however, we all recognise the existence of a rational nature in its external agency, though with the secret of its residence we are unacquainted; and a fascinating countenance finds us all more or less vulnerable, though its shafts are shot, as it were, from an ambush. Oratory, in like manner, or at least the most exalted kind of oratory appears to act by virtue of some hidden principle, which eludes analysis and becomes tangible only in its effects. It would seem as if the element of eloquence, like the æther of the ancients, owed its penetrating quality to its being impalpable. The oratorical merits of Mr. Pitt, as of other speakers of the first rate, we have frequently witnessed attempts to particularise, but always with a sensation that there was something, however undefinable, left untold,—that, at the best, we had an inventory rather than a description. His admirers expatiate, and with justice, on the perfectness of his arrangement, the comprehensiveness of his reasonings, the power of his sarcasm, the magnificence of his declamation, the fluency and correctness of his language, the majestic tone of his voice, the legislative authority of his manner, and his felicitous observance of the temper of his audience. These qualifications Mr. Pitt possessed; and these qualifications could hardly have subsisted together without constituting a great orator; but, at the same time, they might, as we believe, have subsisted together without exactly constituting Mr. Pitt. The effect of such an enumeration is, as if the statue of the Belvidere Apollo should be extolled for its admirable proportions, jointly expressing strength and swiftness —for the anatomical truth of its attitude—for its beauty of feature—for its fineness of workmanship. The catalogue of excellences would, so far as it extended, be faithful; but yet would not convey even a tolerably distinct impression of that air of celestial grace and dignity, which electrifies every spectator of the wonderful production in question, but of which, probably, the constituent characters can no more be described than they can be misunderstood.

But grace and dignity, though they cannot be dissected, may be felt. The more ethereal emanations of exalted talents, the *invisible rays*, if we may so apply the term, of genius, though they do not, in themselves, admit either of perception or of description, may yet be described, as they are perceived, in the effects which they operate. It is on this principle only that we shall attempt to point out what, as it strikes us, was the distinguishing excellence of Mr. Pitt's oratory; and let us not be accused of the spirit of hypothesis, if we shall assert this to have exactly corresponded with what we have already mentioned as the distinguishing excellence of his whole mental system. Every part of his speaking, in sentiment, in language, and in delivery, evidently bore, in our judgment, the stamp of his character. All communicated to us a definite and vivid apprehension of the qualities of strenuousness without bustle, unlaboured intrepidity, and serene greatness. To trace analytically the features, from the combination of which this general expression resulted, we have already declared to be a task beyond our ability. When, however, it is remembered how visibly the minds even of ordinary men are embodied in their outward demeanour, it may readily be conceived that the grandeur of a superior spirit, and especially when it is in the very act of exerting its influence on human subjects should exuberate into every tone, glance, and gesture. The deportment and bearing of Mr. Pitt in debate might not unaptly be compared to those of his countryman, Marlborough, in the field. His courage, always unconquerable, was never busy, impatient, or passionate, and seemed totally independent of the ebullitions

> "Of mounting spirits or fermenting blood."

The distraction or dangers of the most tumultuous scene could not disturb his self-possession, or shake the steadfastness of his foresight. His firmness and command of hand were such, that he could ever volley or check his fury at the given instant; ever *graze the goal*, without effort and without danger.

It is particularly worthy of remark, that, to those who know Mr. Pitt only through

the medium of his reported speeches, a great portion of him must necessarily be lost. The voice, the countenance, the manner, (to say nothing of the thousand proprieties that depend on an intelligence of the feelings of those addressed,) are wanting: and we may add, that no distinguished speaker of the day seems more to have suffered from the inaccuracy of reporters. Still, unless we much deceive ourselves, even in his reported oratory, not a few traces of its original elevation are preserved.

As this moral sublimity formed the great charm of Mr. Pitt's eloquence; so the distinguishing virtue of that of Mr. Fox consisted in the inimitable appearance, which it always wore, of perfect genuineness and sincerity. If the quality that gave character to the oratorical displays of the former was *greatness of soul*, that which informed and animated the speaking of his rival was *depth of heart*. If this account be correct, the eloquence of each of these extraordinary men principally owed its ascendency to a property of a *moral* nature; understanding by that epithet, according to its more enlarged meaning, something that pretends to *mind*, as distinct from mere intellect. Probably the observation might be extended to all eloquence of the highest order. Oratory is one of the means by which man exercises an empire over the minds of his own species; and the only firm basis of mental dominion is mental superiority. These considerations seem to suggest an interesting view of the oratorical art, although a view of it which writers on rhetoric, if they have taken it at all, have at least never taken distinctly. The fact is, that the subject falls within the province of the philosopher, rather than of the rhetorician; for it is conversant with that class of the human faculties which must be born with us,—which education, and, above all, a merely rhetorical education, is incompetent to bestow. Nothing can be more inaccurate than to represent the human mind as resembling some of those curious manufactures, of which the raw material is, in itself, worthless, and derives it whole value from the workmanship bestowed on it. There are certain innate powers and endowments, which, if they must be compared to matter at all, can be compared only to the most rare and delicate among those original configurations of it; the manufacture of which, if the expression may be allowed, is conducted in the secret and inaccessible recesses of nature.—*Quarterly Review*, vol. iv. p. 263—270.

No. II.

WRITINGS OF MISS EDGEWORTH.

See a Reference to the following just and discriminating Estimate of Miss Edgeworth's Genius and Talents, page 469. (Note.)

Of this work it is our duty to render some account to our readers; but we trust we may be allowed, in the first place, to offer to them some general remarks upon an author already so well and so advantageously known to the world. We are the more inclined to do so, because Miss Edgeworth, with that vigour and originality which are among the principal characteristics of genius, has struck out a line of writing peculiar to herself, — a line which it required considerable boldness to adopt, and no common talents to execute, with effect. Not only has Miss Edgeworth interdicted to herself all those unfair and discreditable modes of obtaining popularity to which we have before alluded, but she has also voluntarily renounced many others that may be deemed fair, and comparatively harmless. We do not mean to speak merely of the entire absence of castles, drawbridges, spectres, banditti-caves, forests, moonlight and other scenes, which have furnished to Mrs. Radcliffe, and her school, many a gorgeous and terrific tale. Her most distinguished contemporaries have been content to forego these easy embellishments. But she has made some sacrifices which, if we are not much mistaken, are peculiarly her own. Her pictures are all drawn in the soberest colours. She scarcely makes use of a single tint that is warmer than real life. No writer recurs so rarely, for the purpose of creating an interest, to the stronger and more impetuous feelings of

our nature. Even love, the most powerful passion that acts within the sphere of domestic life,—the presiding deity of the novel and the drama, is handled by her in a way very different from that in which we have been accustomed to see it treated in works of fiction. In them we find it represented sometimes as a guilty, sometimes as an innocent, but generally as an irresistible impulse,—as a feeling which springs up spontaneously in the human breast,—now as a weed—now as a flower—but whether as a weed or as a flower, not to be eradicated. The old rule was, for heroes and heroines to fall suddenly, irretrievably into love;—if they fell in love with the right person, so much the better,—if not, it could not be helped, and the novel ended unhappily. And, above all, it was held quite irregular for the most reasonable people to make any use whatever of their reason on the most important occasion of their lives. Miss Edgeworth has presumed to treat this mighty power with far less reverence. She has analysed it, and found that it does not consist of one simple element, but that several common ingredients enter into its composition—habit,—esteem,—a belief of some corresponding sentiment, and of some suitableness in the character and circumstances of the party. She has pronounced that reason, timely and vigorously applied, is almost a specific;—and following up this bold empirical line of practice, she has actually produced cases of the entire cure of persons who had laboured under its operation. Having mastered love, of course she treats the minor passions with very little ceremony; and, indeed, she brings them out so curbed, watched, and circumscribed, that those who have been accustomed to see them range at large would hardly know them in their new trammels. Her favourite qualities are prudence, firmness, temper, and that active, vigilant good sense, which, without checking the course of our kindly affections, exercises its influence at every moment, and surveys deliberately the motives and consequences of every action. Utility is her object, reason and experience her means. She makes vastly less allowance than has been usually made for those "amiable weaknesses," "sudden impulses," "uncontrollable emotions," which cut so great a figure in the works of her predecessors. Her heroes and heroines are far more thinking, cautious, philosophising persons than ever before were produced in that character. She is, in fact, if we may be allowed to coin a word, an *anti-sentimental* novelist. Her books, so far from lending any countenance to vice, even in its most refined and agreeable form, afford some of the best lessons of practical morality with which we are acquainted. They teach, not merely by dry general maxims on the one hand, or by splendid examples on the other, but by reasons put into the mouths of the actors themselves, what is the right mode of conduct in circumstances of difficulty or temptation. She is constantly endeavouring to point out, by the discussion of cases judiciously selected, or ingeniously invented, what is the road by which virtue conducts us to happiness. There is hardly any good quality to which Miss Edgeworth has not contributed her powerful recommendation; but the ultimate rewards of steadiness, independence, and honest persevering exertion, are those she is fondest of setting before our eyes, and we think her choice is sanctioned by the value of the doctrines which she inculcates. She has, doubtless, observed that this mode of instruction is not adapted to those cases in which to deviate from virtue is palpably a crime. It is to the decalogue, and to the terrors of the law, that we are to look for the prevention of these graver and more striking offences. But men become fickle and indolent, and rely upon others to do that which they ought to do for themselves, before they have remarked the beginning of the evil, without foreseeing its consequences, and without being able to apply a remedy. It is to guard against these bad habits of mind—the causes of so much failure, disgrace, and misery, that Miss Edgeworth has principally directed her attention; and there is scarcely a page that does not contain some exhortation, direct or indirect, by precept or example, to control our passions and to exert our faculties. There are hardly any works of the kind that young persons can read with so much benefit. To their minds she constantly presents, in various shapes, and with a thousand illustrations, this great and salutary maxim—that nothing is to be learned, and very little to be gained, without labour,—severe and continued labour. But she does not forget, in order to reconcile them to this somewhat unpalatable doctrine, to show with equal care and truth that labour becomes vastly less irksome by habit,—that, *judiciously directed*, it seldom fails of its object,—that laziness, even to those whose rank and *fortune screen* them from its most dreadful consequences—poverty and contempt—is in

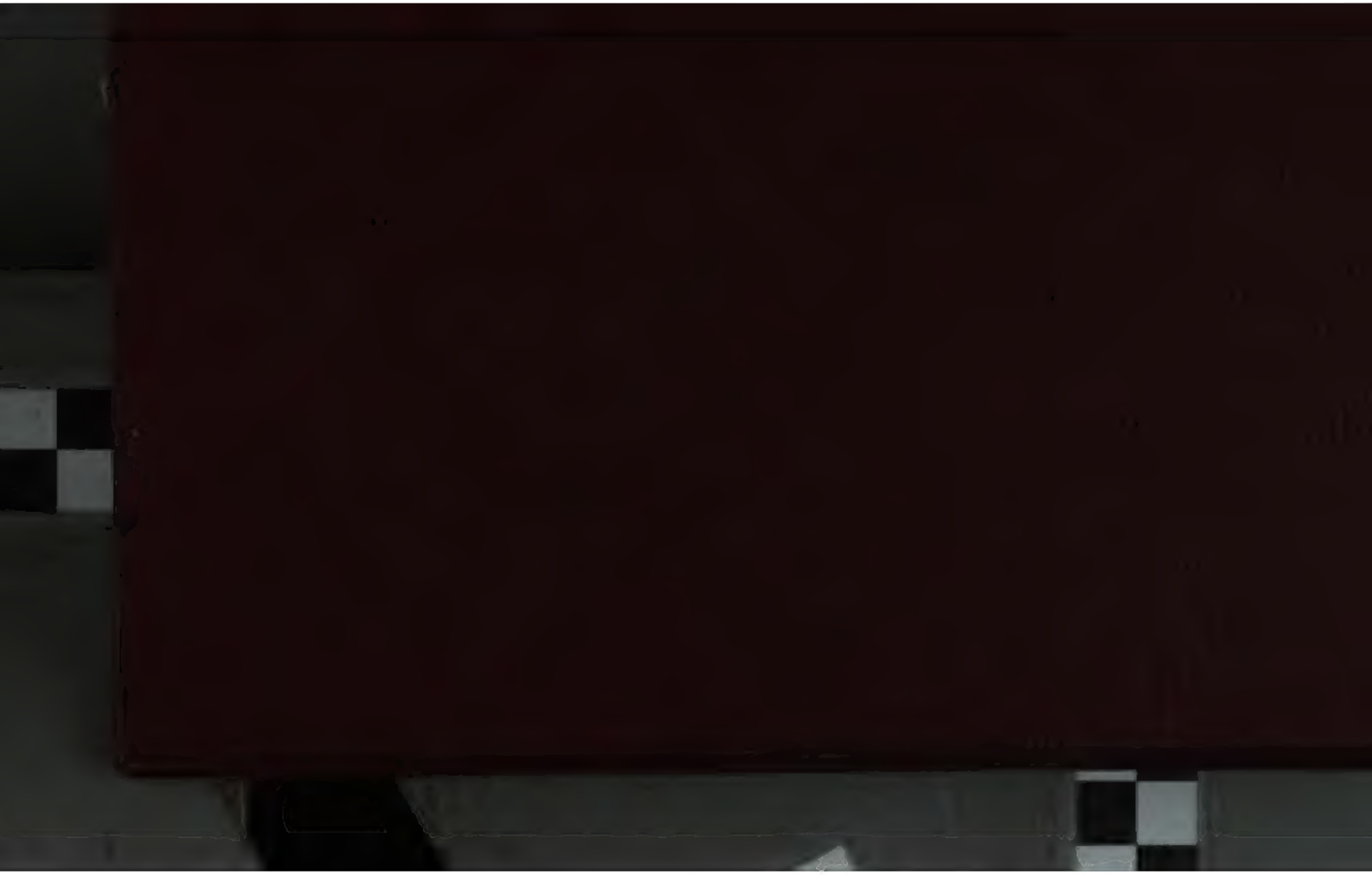
itself wearisome and painful; — that the pauses and recreations of successful diligence comprise within them more cheerfulness and real gratification than are spread over the whole surface of a merely pleasurable life. With this view, her principal characters are represented as persons of good, but not of extraordinary faculties: they do nothing suddenly and "*per saltum*," and their success and attainments are no more than what half the world may hope to equal by following the same means. She deals in examples, not in wonders; her's are models of *imitable* excellence, and she rarely abuses the license of fiction to exhibit those miraculous combinations of virtue and talents, which, though they delight us for a moment with the image of perfection, serve to perplex and discourage, not to guide, the ordinary race of mortals.

Our readers, we presume, are aware (and if they are not, they will be very far from doing justice to Miss Edgeworth's merits) that, so far as effect is concerned, this uniform systematic preference of what is *useful* to what is *splendid* is a prodigious disadvantage. It is upon dazzling characters, in which virtue, bordering in its excess upon the contiguous fault, more resembles a generous instinct than a quality cultivated and strengthened by reason, that the writers of novels have justly relied for securing the public attention. Discretion and a logical head they thought by no means fit for the heroes and heroines of romance. And, undoubtedly, if effect were the only object, they did much better with rash courage, inconsiderate generosity, hasty confidence, and love ardent and irresistible at first sight, qualities infinitely more attractive to the bulk of mankind than those with which Miss Edgeworth has ventured to invest the principal persons of her drama. If, then, in spite of sacrifices to which hardly any one else has submitted, she has contrived to render her works highly entertaining and popular, she surely deserves double praise, not merely for having surmounted a difficulty, which, when that difficulty has been made only for the purpose of being surmounted, is a merit of a very inferior order, but because the purpose for which she voluntarily encountered it was highly useful and important.

To the accomplishment of this task she has brought very considerable talents and acquirements; various reading; knowledge which, though she is too judicious to display it with ostentation, seems to be both extensive and accurate; a nice observation of manners and character, both in individuals and in society; a clear, easy, unencumbered style, and a keen sense of the ridiculous. Her two strong points are good sense and humour; and it is by the buoyant power of her humour that she has been able to diffuse among the public so large a portion of her good sense. Nothing can be more chaste and correct, and at the same time more ludicrous, than the representation of themselves, which her characters are made to give in their own conversation. That condition so indispensable to the true comic — their utter unconsciousness of the effect they are producing, is strictly observed. The hand of the author is never perceived, (as it almost constantly is in our modern comedies, to the entire digust of all persons of tolerable taste,) but they are led, in the most natural manner imaginable, and without saying any thing that they might not be supposed to say, to cover themselves with ridicule. The absolute want of colouring and exaggeration only serves to improve the picture, and strengthens the impression almost up to that of the same circumstances in real life. We have always thought these dramatic parts of Miss Edgeworth's books, which indeed take up a considerable share of them, very much the best; and it is to this remarkable talent for humour that she is indebted for the popularity she enjoys, in spite, not only of the disadvantages to which (as we have already observed) she has spontaneously submitted, but also of some defects which we shall now, though unwillingly, proceed to notice.

In the first, and one of the most material branches of novel writing, that of framing a story, she is remarkably deficient. It must at the same time be owned, that this art, when carried to its highest pitch, is a great, and therefore uncommon specimen of genius and skill: indeed, if we were to mention that which, in a choice of excellences, we most admire in Fielding's great work, it would perhaps be that wonderful variety of incidents, arising without improbability, and introduced without confusion, and tending, through a story constantly rising in interest, to an unforeseen catastrophe. Any comparison with so happy an effort of so great a master whould necessarily be unfair; but the truth is that, in this respect, Miss Edgeworth is inferior, not only to those that are generally her superiors, but to many among those that are vastly below her

in every thing else. She has little fertility in contriving, and still less dexterity in combining, events. It is in characters that she shines: when she attempts to give interest to events, it is almost always at the expense of nature and probability. Her narrative is hammered out "invitâ Minervâ," and she never would have attempted it at all, except as a convenient vehicle for sketches of life and manners.

On her morality, we have bestowed its due praise. It is of that sort which is most calculated to do real practical good; but the desire of instructing is too little disguised. The reader sees too plainly that he is under discipline. There is too much downright lecturing. The serious parts have a *prim* didactic air. The lesser rules of conduct are deduced truly enough, but with too much parade of accuracy and strictness, from general principles. We know how necessary the square and the rule are to the architect; but we do not like to see the chalk-marks upon the building. Morality ought not to smell of the lamp. It has been Miss Edgeworth's fancy to give all her virtuous characters a tincture of science, and to make them fond of chemistry and mechanics. We have no sort of objection to see them endowed with this useful knowledge, provided it does not prevent them from having rather more warmth, and rather more grace. To say the truth, we are inclined to think that, in avoiding the common error of novel writers, who make morality depend too much upon feeling, and too little upon the understanding, she has not completely escaped the opposite fault, but has ascribed too large a share of it to the head, and too little to the heart. — *Quarterly Review*, vol. ix. pp. 302–303.

END OF VOL. II.